JASON'S LYRIC

an Original Screenplay by

Bobby Smith, Jr.

THE JACKSON/MCHENRY COMPANY
300 S. Lorimar Plaza
Producers Building 3, Suite 27
Burbank, CA 91505

June 23, 1993
© 1993

JASON'S LYRIC

FADE IN:

INT. BUS - DAY

Shadows... light and dark... light and dark... slow... rhythmical... washing over the pillar that is the man. He's strong. He's handsome. A face of innocence. Yet eyes of a thousand experiences. A man torn from the patch of Africa that has been sewn into the quilt of America. A black man. JASON ALEXANDER, mid-twenties, stares dead ahead, motionless, swimming in introspection. About him a melange of muffled sounds. WOMEN'S CHIT-CHATTER, BABIES CRYING, MEN LAUGHING. The innocent sound of CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER and soon takes the forefront. It ricochets through Jason's mind.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY (EARLY 70'S)

Blurred streaks of gold. Slowly things become visible and we DISCOVER a magnificent field of daisies. We hear LAUGHTER. CAMERA MOVES THROUGH the flowers TOWARDS the sounds of joy. Slowly things become visible and we DISCOVER MADDOG, a handsome, muscular black man in his mid-twenties. He twirls 'round and 'round in circles holding his two sons -- they laugh -- they love this. JASON, the oldest, is an adorable five-year-old. JOSHUA, is two. They hear a ROARING NOISE in the sky. Joshua begins to cry in fear, Maddog comforts him as he and Jason look skyward. An old FIRE PLANE APPROACHES overhead and begins to spray water -- imitation raindrops onto the wildflowers. Maddog still holding Joshua, begins to spin 'round slowly as he looks to the magic, mesmerized. Jason, imitates his father. They both smile toward the heavens.

JASON (V.O.)
Maddog taught us 'bout magic.
Said he had talked with God and
God had told him where to find it.
And we went there, once a week,
and just stared at the blue skies
blinded by the sun and we smiled...
waitin' for a miracle... waitin'
for the rainmaker...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAXI CAB - HAND - SUNSET

adjusts the charge meter and reaches for the glove compartment to retrieve a small bottle of MADDOG 20/20 and light a cigarette. The sounds of OTIS REDDING exude from the RADIO.

As the taxi continues we see through the --

DRIVER'S POV - SEVERAL PEOPLE

on the street: several old black men sitting in front of a run-down tenement building chugging from paper-bagged beer and wine. Kids playing double dutch and hopscotch near a broken fire hydrant that sprays forcefully into the hot Texan wind. In the b.g. we see a working harbor, docks, cranes, ships. SEAGULLS SQUAWK and scurry with the haunting HORNS of CARGO SHIPS heading toward the docks. This is definitely a ghetto, but still grips on to the feeling of a neighborhood, a home. But we know that the neighborhood is on the brink of social deterioration.

EXT. STREET - CAB - MOVING

The cab pulls to the curb in front of a tenement building.

JASON

now eleven-years-old rushes out to greet the driver. Joshua, eight, stays on the stoop.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal:

MADDOG

in the driver's seat. Still handsome, but unkempt, Maddog is now in his mid-thirties. He sports a well-worn T-shirt covered by an abused leather jacket, his Vietnam dog tags still adorn his neck. Maddog takes another swig from his 20/20 then reaches under his seat to reveal a gun. He exits the car and begins to walk, with a limp, towards Jason.

Jason continues to run towards Maddog. Maddog has a very stern look on his face. He points the gun at Jason and very seriously begins to pull the trigger.

BOOM.

Sounds of GUNFIRE ECHO as water sprays forth from the toy gun engulfing Jason's face. Jason laughs and his father continues to squirt him.

JASON (V.O.)
Mama says that Vietnam drove Maddog crazy. She said when he lost his leg he lost his mind.

Jason continues to laugh.

JASON
(tries to avoid water)
Stop. Stop.

MADDOG
Proper command?

JASON
Cease fire!

Maddog stops squirting.

MADDOG
Soldier, come give Maddog a hug.

Jason runs to Maddog and embraces him.

JASON (V.O.)
But I wanted to love him. I wanted the magic back.

MADDOG
How's my lil' warrior been?

JASON
Fine.

MADDOG
And that fine mama of yours.

JASON
She fine, too.

MADDOG
You know one day we gonna be a family again.

Jason tenses up and doesn't respond. Maddog pays this no mind and calls out.

MADDOG
Joshua!

Maddog and Jason walk towards Joshua. Joshua, disgusted, turns away.

MADDOG
How 'bout some ice-cream today?

JASON
(excitedly)
Yeah!

Without looking at Maddog, Joshua gets up and turns to leave. Maddog grabs his arm.

MADDOG
Joshua, don't go.

No response. The hold is painful. Tears fill Joshua's eyes as he glares at his father. Jason intervenes.

JASON
Maddog, you're hurting him.

A long, tense beat ensues and then Maddog realizes that he is hurting Joshua and releases him. Joshua runs inside. Maddog, hurt, looks towards the door. Jason takes his father by the arm and they begin towards the taxi.

JASON (V.O)
Joshua and Maddog never got along. He could never get used to the mood swings. He thought Maddog was shit. I knew it made Maddog kinda sad.

MADDOG
You got any money?

Jason nods no. Maddog pulls out his wallet.

MADDOG
A man should never leave his house with empty pockets. Let's see what I got here.

As Maddog searches his wallet, a hoodlum runs by and grabs it. Maddog chases the man. He catches the criminal and violently beats him, kicks him and batters him with a lead pipe that he finds nearby.

JASON

motionless.

JASON'S POV

Maddog, covered in blood, turns and notices Jason over his right shoulder.

BACK TO SCENE

They stare at each other a long moment.

Maddog drops the pipe and retrieves his wallet. Calmly, he approaches Jason. As he does he looks toward the apartment window and discovers Joshua looking on.

MADDOG
Never disrespect a man's property. Always give a brother his propers.

Maddog gives Jason a ten-dollar bill. Jason hesitates for a beat, takes it, puts it in his pocket.

JASON
I gotta go. 'Night, Maddog.

MADDOG
I love you, soldier.

Jason heads up the stairs. Maddog heads for his cab and then turns back to Jason.

MADDOG
Tell your mama I love her and I'll be by soon.

Again Jason tenses up and enters the building. Joshua closes the curtain. Maddog continues to the cab.

EXT. JASON'S APARTMENT BUILDING - SUNSET

Joshua and Jason are approaching their home, trading kicks with an abused beer can. They carry toy rifles. War paint is on their faces. They are tired soldiers singing, "100 Bottles Of Beer."

THEIR POV

Maddog exits their building and approaches his cab that is parked beside the curb.

BACK TO SCENE

The boys stare at each other. Fear is ridden over their faces. The cab takes off. The boys bolt into the building.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY DOOR - DAY

Jason and Joshua run to the door. The door's almost been kicked in. They bolt into the apartment.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is small, but well-kept. The furnishings are second-hand, but carefully chosen. Family pictures hang on the walls. The boys watch as GLORIA, an attractive black woman in her 20s, frantically rummages through a small drawer in the kitchen. She's wearing a Kentucky Fried Chicken uniform. She's the boys' mother. She throws various items to the floor.

GLORIA
Where is it? Goddammit! What is all this shit?! I can't keep up with nothin' 'round here. How am I gonna put a lock up? Where is my goddamn screwdriver?

Frustrated, she slams the drawer shut. The boys stare at their mother. She doesn't notice them.

GLORIA
(to herself)
I'll put it on tomorrow.

She nervously lights a cigarette and begins to smoke it quickly.

JASON
You alright, Mama?

She nods yes as she continues to smoke.

JOSHUA
Why can't he leave us the fuck alone?

Joshua storms into his room and slams the door. Gloria continues to smoke nervously. Jason picks up the things on the floor.

JASON (V.O.)
About once a week like clockwork Maddog came by. His knock was always heavy... like a wounded fist hitting at a hollow wall. Mama always acted unaffected... but we knew she was afraid... afraid of what he might do with the chain unlocked.

INT. BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT

Jason and Joshua are in twin beds side by side. Model airplanes hang from the ceiling over Jason's bed. All sorts of toy military weaponry surrounds Joshua's bed. Jason wears an oversized T-shirt with a picture of the blue angels and blue pajama bottoms, Joshua wears camouflage pajamas. The only lights are the occasional shines of passing cars. A SIREN disappears into the distance. The boys lie on their back staring at the ceiling.

JOSHUA
Just don't make no sense. He ain't nothing but a drunk. Why was she eva' with him?!

JASON
He didn't always used to be like this. He used to do a lot of special things with us.
(beat)
I guess you was too young.

A beat.

JOSHUA
Do you think Mama ever loved him?

JASON
They loved each other.

Jason turns and looks at Joshua.

JASON
He loved you too, Josh.

Joshua continues to stare at the ceiling.

INT. MADDOG'S APARTMENT - CLOSE ON MADDOG'S HAND - NIGHT

taking his prosthetic leg from a worn-out duffel bag. He begins to attach it. PULL BACK to a full-length mirror revealing an unshaven and drunk Maddog. He sits at a table in his underwear.

ANGLE ON CANDLES

burning. They are placed atop shelves, tables, beside the bed -- a shrine -- the only source of lighting in the small one-room apartment. Guns, grenades, military ribbons and pictures of Gloria clutter the room. Occasionally we move across pictures of his children, Jason and Joshua. A RADIO BLASTS the sounds of Isaac Hayes' hot-buttered soul rendition of "By The Time I Get To Phoenix."

MADDOG

sings along with the music. He sits back, takes a swig and a toke. Scars on his right arm and chest read "Gloria." He notices a hunting knife on his table and places it above a candle flame. He continues to sing with BLACK MOSES. He takes the:

KNIFE

and begins to etch Gloria's name in his left arm. He grits his teeth and growls. He takes a swig of Maddog 20/20, he notices a --

BOX

on the table. He picks it up and opens it. We DISCOVER a diamond ring. He stares -- deep in thought. He begins to sing again, solemnly.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT

The boys are fast asleep. We hear a BANGING on the front door.

MADDOG (O.S.)
Come on, Gloria, open the door.

The boys wake and listen.

GLORIA (O.S.)
Maddog, go home.

MADDOG
Gloria. Gloria. Open the Goddamn door!

A LOUD THUD, the door bursts open. This jolts the boys. Jason quickly gets out of bed and rushes into the den. Joshua continues to lie there, staring at the ceiling.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gloria's STEREO PLAYS. Jason rushes into the room and watches on fearfully. The sounds of Aretha Franklin's "Bridge Over Troubled Waters."

MADDOG
(offering her ring box)
You gotta marry me, baby.

GLORIA
No! I ain't gonna marry you! Now go on home!

He continues to limp towards her, growing angry.

MADDOG
It's my leg, ain't it? It's my leg!

GLORIA
That leg ain't got nothing to do with it!

MADDOG
(growing crazed)
You don't think I'm a man! You don't think I'm a man! Marry me, Gloria.

GLORIA
No!

With this he strikes her across her face. Joshua appears in the room.

MADDOG
Marry me!

GLORIA
No!

Maddog strikes Gloria again. She falls to the ground, fearfully backing away from Maddog as he approaches.

JOSHUA
(under his breath; to Jason)
Get the gun.

Jason doesn't hear him and rushes to his father.

JASON
Maddog, stop! You're gonna kill her! Please, Maddog, please...

Jason grabs the back of Maddog. Maddog shakes him off and continues towards Gloria in an intense rage. Gloria continues to back away.

JASON
(crying)
Please, Maddog... don't hurt Mama... Please...

JOSHUA
(cold determination)
Get the gun.

JASON
No.

Maddog continues his abuse. Joshua rushes down the hallway. Jason's so enthralled with the fight that it takes a moment before he notices Joshua heading away.

JASON
Josh!

He rushes after him.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S DEN - SAME TIME

Gloria is weakened and crying. She looks up. Horror covers her face.

GLORIA
(shaking her head)
No... Put that away.

We hear a rustling. Maddog looks up pitifully. He seems desperate and broken. He looks back to Gloria who is near unconsciousness. He picks up her hand and slides the ring on it. He leaps out for something.

GLORIA
(screaming)
Noooooo.

CAMERA HOLDS ON Maddog. BOOM. A GUNSHOT. The impact of the bullet causes Maddog to fall backward. CAMERA SLOWLY PANS TO Gloria, bleeding. CAMERA MOVES TO Joshua's face. His stare is cold and unmoving. CAMERA MOVES TO Jason's face. His eyes full of tears. CAMERA PULLS BACK. Gloria rocks back and forth crying next to Maddog's body. The brothers stand side by side, the gun at their feet --

JASON (V.O.)
That's the day the magic died.
That night I held my brother
tightly until he fell asleep.
His heart beat fast -- like a
time bomb ticking.

SCREEN --

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK

All we hear is a TICKING NOISE.

JASON (V.O.)
And I was condemned to hear the
same song over and over and over...

BOOM. A GUNSHOT.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS' ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Jason bolts upright in his bed. He is sweating profusely and gasps for breath. He is now 24. He gazes over his surroundings, reminding himself that it was just a dream. He looks to his clock: 4:00 AM.

He looks over to Joshua's bed. It is empty. Tightly well-made, neat. The boys' beds are now placed on opposite sides of the room. The military theme has been intensified by the various military belongings of Maddog. A purple heart hangs on the wall beside Jason's bed and a picture of him in uniform sits on Jason's dresser. Jason's walls are now postered with images of Michael Jordan, the Concorde, and the space shuttle.

In a corner beside Joshua's bed we DISCOVER Maddog's duffel bag.

He lies back down in his bed and stares at several meticulously-constructed remote control model airplanes that hang from his ceiling.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING

Jason, dressed in a patchwork silk shirt, 501 jeans, and Timberlakes walks quietly down the hallway. He carries an athletic bag.

CUT TO:

INT. GLORIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jason peeks into the room. Gloria is fast asleep. She looks peaceful now, but the wrinkles on her face sing a different song. She sleeps deeply, exhausted from a life that has been no crystal stair. Jason walks to his mother's side, runs his fingers across her hair and kisses her on the cheek. She wakes and smiles.

GLORIA
Jason.

JASON
I'm goin', Mama.

She brushes her hand against his cheek and turns to look at her clock. It reads: 7:00 AM. She looks back to him.

GLORIA
Today's the day. Drive carefully. Get him home safe.

JASON
(smiling)
I will.

GLORIA
It's gonna be good this time. He gonna do right. I can feel it.

Jason forces himself to smile back at her as he nods "yes." She begins to doze back to sleep, still smiling. In Jason's eyes we can see that he is concerned. He kisses her on the forehead once more and then leaves.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A commercial airline bolts into the sky. CAMERA PULLS BACK and in the distance we see a convertible speeding down a lone road, surrounded by the abundant flatlands of Texas. We MOVE CLOSER and DISCOVER it is Jason.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRISON - DAY

The prison is overwhelmingly large and surrounded by guards, some standing atop watch towers, others patrolling the entrance areas. Up ahead in front of the main gate, we can barely make out the IMAGES of a couple of men with duffel bags, waiting. Jason rolls INTO FRAME and looks toward the men. One man wearing dark shades rises, hoists his bag over his shoulder and begins to approach.

A hopeful smile covers Jason's face and soon fades. Joshua is now IN VIEW. He is handsome but hardened. A sneer covers his face. He gets into the car. There is a long moment of silence as the brothers stare at each other. Joshua slowly begins to smile and quickly grabs Jason by the neck in a bearhold. He kisses Jason atop his head.

JOSHUA
I see you didn't forget the way.

JASON
Nigger, I done drove this road four times.

JOSHUA
Four times is a charm.

He releases Jason.

JASON
I thought it was three.

JOSHUA
You know nigs in the harbor can't count.

JASON
You better count your muthafuckin' blessings 'cause once again Mama's lettin' your black ass come home.

Jason smiles, punches the gas and they speed off into the distance, we can hear their LAUGHTER.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - JOSHUA'S POV - DAY

A series of tenement buildings and stores that we saw at the beginning of the film. They are now sorely run-down, barred and boarded up. Walls are covered with graffiti, streets are covered with litter. The sun bounces off of any object that will provide a glare. It is extra bright, an extremely hot day. Gangsters rule the turf. Some stand in darkened hallways, others on stoops, others atop cars. Guns sit half concealed in waistbands. Children seem unaffected as they play on dilapidated playgrounds on broken swings and around absent see-saws, while a few feet away drugs exchange hands. Colorful B-Girls shoot the shit -- passing time. RAP MUSIC fills the air.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

JOSHUA
(excitedly, extending his arm)
The harbor. My world.

JASON
Man, this shit ain't got nothin' to do with the world. That's why I'm tryin' to get a job to take me out of here.

JOSHUA
What?

JASON
I'm up for a management position.

JOSHUA
(concerned)
You leavin'.

JASON
I don't know yet.

Up ahead Joshua notices a bum who pees beside a trashcan.

JOSHUA
Nigger, you ain't gonna go no place.
(brushing it off)
Ya, there's fast Freddy

Jason looks to Freddy, he's zipping up his pants.

JOSHUA
(yells to Freddy)
Fast Freddy.

FREDDY
You out, Josh?

JOSHUA
Hell yes! Do a dance for me!

The bum breaks into a pathetic tap dance routine. The boys begin to laugh as they continue to drive.

JOSHUA
That's one crazy motherfucker.

They come to a red light. A one-way sign sits on the corner.

Suddenly, a B-Boy in his twenties jumps into the back seat, it is TEDDY. He smokes a cigarette. The boys quickly turn towards him.

JOSHUA
Nigger, you wanna get aced?

Teddy smiles.

TEDDY
What, I scared ya'? Welcome back, man.

Teddy and Josh shake hands.

JASON
Whassup, Teddy?

TEDDY
Same ole same ole.

RAT, a chubby twenty-year-old with a jeri-curl, runs up to the car and gets in. He's panting, out of breath, eating a honey bun.

JASON
(to Rat)
Don't leave that mutha fuckin' wrapper in my car again. Gotta keep my ride fresh for the honeys.

JOSHUA
Goddamn, Rat... you eat so much trash no wonder you full of shit.

Jason takes off.

RAT
Fuck you, I might be eatin' trash, but I been eatin' pussy too. What were they feedin' your ass... bitch.

They all laugh.

TEDDY
(to Jason and Joshua)
Y'all down for a brewski?

JOSHUA
Why the fuck not.

JASON
Naw... I gotta get to work. Why don't you stop by K.F.C. and see Mama.

JOSHUA
(pointing to Teddy and Rat)
Man, me and my crew, we got business to discuss.

JASON
Nigger... your business better not be about no crack 'less you wanna go back to sportin' handcuffs for bracelets.

JOSHUA
(holding out his arm)
Only things gonna be on this wrist is some gold. Get my ass to Big Daddy's.

JASON
Don't fuck up.

JOSHUA
Damn, don't you know when a brother jokin'? I just wanna have a brew with my boys.

JASON
Your ass better be home by eight.

JOSHUA
Cool.

They continue down the street.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Darkness. We hear RANDOM GIGGLES and "be quiets." The front door opens and the lights quickly come on. The apartment is filled with streamers and balloons. Gloria, Jason and several guests jump up. They are family friends.

EVERYONE
Surprise!

Everyone's excitement and laughter dies as they look towards the door. Joshua is extremely drunk. Gloria looks to her son with a cold, still, glare of disappointment.

The guests are obviously embarrassed for her. Jason watches all of this. Joshua sloppily walks towards a table. A large cake sits on it.

JOSHUA
(reading cake)
'Welcome home, Joshua.'

He digs his hand into the cake and shoves it into his mouth.

JOSHUA
(to Gloria)
Hi, Mama.

She is about to break. Quickly Jason goes to Joshua and puts his arm around him and smiles to guests.

JASON
Looks like he done a lil' bit too much celebrating.

The guests force smiles on their faces. Jason begins to lead Joshua to the bedroom. Gloria remains unmoved.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Jason lies Joshua on his bed and begins to take off Joshua's shoes angrily.

JOSHUA
Goddamn... a party. Was there a bitch in that cake.

JASON
Josh... just go to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Jason re-enters the room. Guests are now preparing to leave. Gloria is clearing the table.

JASON
Where's everybody goin'? The party ain't over yet.

He rushes to the STEREO and CRANKS IT UP. He then takes Gloria's hand.

JASON
Come on... Mama... let's dance.

Reluctantly, Gloria dances with him. And soon he has her laughing. The guests begin to join in.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

BOOM! Jason, startled, bolts upright in his bed. He is sweating profusely and gasping for breath. He gazes over his surroundings, reminding himself that it was just a dream. He looks to his clock: 4:45AM. He looks over to Joshua who is still sleeping off his drunkenness. Jason regroups, gets out of bed. Looks towards his desk and notices a half-built remote-controlled airplane. He sits down and works on it.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Jason continues to work on the plane. His attention is soon drawn to the sunlight that sneaks through his window. He watches for a moment and then turns to his brother. He picks up a basketball that sits on a nearby shelf. He shakes Joshua. After a few failed attempts, Joshua awakes with a frown. Jason looks at his brother.

JASON
Get the fuck up.

JOSHUA
What you want?

JASON
We gonna play ball.

JOSHUA
Nigger, you crazy?!

JASON
Get the fuck up. I'm gettin' you started on the right foot. Get the fuck up. Need to sweat some of that goddamn alcohol outta your system.

Joshua rolls over in bed, trying to go back to sleep.

JASON
Come on now. I'm ready to whip your ass on the court?

Joshua rolls back over, quickly.

JOSHUA
Whip my ass? Boy, I don't think you got enough sleep. You know I could...

JASON
Don't tell me...

Jason throws the ball into Joshua's chest.

JASON
... show me.

Joshua smirks.

JOSHUA
Bet.

Jason heads to the bathroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAWN

The morning sun peeks through the crevices of the many structures crowding the Houston ghetto.

Jason and Joshua, bare chested, play one-on-one on a run-down court surrounded by tenement buildings. The image of the brothers is almost dream-like in the morning mist. Jason has the ball, Joshua guards him closely. They play aggressively.

JOSHUA
You up early 'cause you still havin' those dreams, ain't you.

Jason goes in for a lay-up. WHOOSH.

JASON
Man... you don't need to worry about my problems. You need to get a goddamn job.

JOSHUA
I'll get a fuckin' job when I'm ready.

Joshua throws from the line. WHOOSH.

JASON
Fuck you, man. You not gonna put Mama through this shit no more. You need to get off that goddamn bottle.

JOSHUA
What I need is to get you off my goddamn back.

Jason guards Joshua.

JASON
Man... why the fuck can't you do right. Didn't you learn nothin' in prison?

Joshua rushes for the goal. He violently knocks his brother down and goes in for the dunk -- WHOOSH!

JOSHUA
That's what I learned.

Joshua begins to walk off. Jason watches for a moment and then pulls himself up.

JASON
Josh, wait up.

Joshua continues to walk. Jason rushes to him.

JASON
I'm here to help, just say the word. We cool? Done. We cool?

No response.

JASON
We cool?

Joshua smiles. Jason grabs him by the neck in a bearhold.

JASON
So you gonna do right?

Joshua smiles and nods "yes."

JASON
Cool.

The boys head towards the tenement buildings and soon are swallowed by the mist.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONVERTIBLE - MOVING - DAY

Jason pulls up to Kentucky Fried Chicken.

INT. CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Jason wears a white, button-down shirt with the name "Buckin' Billy's" embroidered above the pocket. He wears a tie. Jason busily finishes tying a second tie. Joshua sits in the passenger seat staring dead ahead. He's wearing a KFC shirt, unbuttoned. Jason puts the tie around his brother's neck.

Joshua angrily flicks at his shirt.

JOSHUA
This shit ain't me. Wearin' a uniform, salutin' a white colonel.

JASON
I know this ain't the dopest nine to five. But it's the first step. Mama done beg the man to give you a job. Just try awright.

Without looking at Jason, Joshua gets out and slams the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCKIN' BILLY'S T.V.S AND RADIOS - LOADING DOCK - DAY

A large truck stocked with televisions, stereos, etc... is backed into the dock. In the open back of the truck we see BOBBY, a hip-hop brother in his 20s, adjusting a large box onto a dolly. He begins to wheel it into the storage area.

Jason passes Bobby on his way back into the truck. He picks up a box.

JASON
Man, I just got a fine bitches digits. I mean baby had back! She couldn't look me in the eyes, she was too busy lookin' at my personals.

Bobby's walking out of the truck holding a box, Jason heads back, laughing.

JASON
Know what I'm sayin'.

BOBBY
Nigger, you full of shit!

Jason loads another box onto the dolly.

Laughing they continue to retrieve boxes.

WOMAN (V.O.)
(through P.A. system)
Jason... you're needed in the front. Please come to the front.

In the background we hear a MUFFLED ARGUMENT.

JASON
Shit...

He throws down a box and heads in.

INT. BUCKIN' BILLY'S - DAY

ELMO, a black man in his late sixties stands behind a counter arguing with MS. MURPHY, a stubborn black woman in her fifties. In the b.g. we see three little black boys running amuck and acting bad.

The shop is filled with all sorts of electronics. Rows and rows of TELEVISIONS are on display projecting VARIOUS SHOWS.

MS. MURPHY
I bet this shit wouldn't of happened if I'd gone to a white man's shop! I want my TV fixed!

ELMO
Your warranty's up. We don't do repairs for free. That's our policy!

MS. MURPHY
Policy! I'll show you policy!

Angrily, Ms. Murphy begins to climb up on the counter. Jason enters and rushes to her, pulling her down.

JASON
Come on, Ms. Murphy. Let me help you down from here.

Ms. Murphy proudly begins to straighten herself up.

JASON
Let's talk.

He takes her hand and begins to walk down the aisle of televisions with Ms. Murphy.

JASON
Now you've had that TV for about a year now. How's the color been?

MS. MURPHY
Sometimes Oprah does look a little peaked, but it's fine.

JASON
You could of bought one of those cheaper TVs but you didn't and that told me you were smart. You went for quality.

Ms. Murphy smiles, flattered.

MS. MURPHY
Well, I did graduate junior high school.

Jason smiles.

JASON
Now for just 30 cents a week you can extend your warranty for two years. For two years no problems, whenever it's broke you bring it straight to me. And I'll tell you what, if you sign up today, I'll fix that TV for you right now.

MS. MURPHY
Lead me to the water. I want to take a drink.

Jason smiles and leads Ms. Murphy to the cashier at the service counter. Elmo smiles.

ELMO
Jason, come on over here, boy.

Jason approaches him.

ELMO
I ain't seen nobody shut Ruth up before.

JASON
Sometimes customers just need a little talkin' to.

ELMO
You'll be doin' a lot more of that soon.

JASON
What you mean?

ELMO
Son, you gonna be a manager. Heard the news today. Got a position open in Dallas.

JASON
No shit?

ELMO
(proudly)
No shit!

JASON
For real?

ELMO
(chuckling)
For real. Now go on. Make me some more money.

Jason, smiling, heads off to greet another customer.

EXT. HOMESTEAD AVE. - DAY

CLOSEUP - MOUTH

of a street PREACHER.

PREACHER
Let me tell you about shit that travels. Shit that sticks to you and grows in your mind, in your soul.

Jason pulls up in his car and parks on the curb. He gets out and walks down the street. Happily he unbuttons his shirt and rolls up his sleeves. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal a homeless black man in his fifties. He preaches his sermon from a bus stop bench. He passes children playing in the streets, and various people occupying building stoops, hoping for a breeze to come their way. He nods several hellos. There is a long row of trash cans piled very high. One area of the street is sectioned off with yellow tape which reads, "DO NOT CROSS." In the taped-off area is a chalk tracing of a man's body. Two young girls are coloring and adding detail to it. As this ensues we still hear the voice of the Preacher.

PREACHER (V.O.)
There's shit like that in this world. Shit that won't let you forget. Shit that clogs up your mind and makes everything stink. Shit that you just can't wipe away. It just travels and grows and suffocates.

Jason arrives at the entrance of Kentucky Fried Chicken. As he opens the door, LOLA, a bumping round-the-way girl in her early twenties, walks out. She flirtatiously eyes him and continues.

JASON
Hope you have a good man at home waitin' for you.

She stops and turns to him.

LOLA
Why... you know any?

JASON
(with an inviting smile)
I might.

She smiles as he hands her a small pad and pencil from his pocket.

LOLA
(writing)
Well, when you find him tell him to give me a call.
(seductively placing the pad back in his pocket)
I'm Lola.

She leaves sashaying for Jason's benefit. Jason smiles appreciating the performance.

CUT TO:

INT. KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN - NIGHT

Jason walks over to JANIE, a black woman, ringing the cash register. Several customers wait in line.

JASON
Yo, Janie, where's Moms?

Janie points to the back and continues with customers. Jason moves to Gloria. She sits with her back to him staring out the window.

JASON
(excited)
Mama, I got some news today.

GLORIA
(still staring out the window)
For seven years I've been assistant manager. Seven years. I've been in charge of eight sometimes ten people at a time. I've had my problems. But in seven years never has my register been short. That made me proud. And in one day my child took my seven years for $10.

Jason slides into a seat across from Gloria and takes her hand.

GLORIA
I've tried to love him. It's been hard. But I've tried. I woulda thrown him to the street long ago if you wasn't in my house. You're like night and day. And I just keep hopin' that a little bit of your light gonna shine on his darkness.

Jason stares at Gloria feeling the weight of the world.

GLORIA
(forcing a smile)
Now what was your good news?

Jason slowly gets up.

JASON
It's nothing. We'll talk about it later.

Jason places something in her hand and leaves. She slowly unravels a ten dollar bill and smiles teary-eyed.

CUT TO:

INT. POOL HALL/BAR - NIGHT

Swinging doors burst open and Jason enters the red lit bar determinely searching for Joshua. He passes all types: women in their 20s who are dressed like whores hoping for a quick trick. O.G.s and hip hoppers who are searching for a good time.

On the stage we DISCOVER a scraggly and extremely thin 23-year-old black woman, the club's titty dancer and main attraction. She wears a gold g-string and wraps herself around a pole seductively, most of the men don't pay attention. Jason sees Teddy at a pool table. A cigarette hangs from his mouth and he is carefully preparing to make a shot. Jason approaches him.

JASON
Yo, Teddy, what's...

Teddy raises his hand signalling Jason to be quiet. Teddy begins to concentrate again for the shot as he does Jason looks around and soon he discovers Rat sitting right in front of the stage, eating a honey bun and gawking at the dancer. Teddy makes the shot -- he completely misses his target and strikes.

TEDDY
Damn!
(to Jason)
It's this goddamn stick.

Jason smiles cynically.

JASON
Yeah. Check it out, man, Josh been 'round.

TEDDY
Last I saw him he was in the back makin' peace with Jack Daniels.

Teddy turns to make another shot. Jason walks off. Once again Teddy strikes.

TEDDY
Shit!

He slams the stick against the table. Jason walks through the crowd towards the back and soon discovers Joshua sitting at a table alone, his head nods back and forth as he dozes off in drunkenness. A bottle of Jack Daniels sits before him, almost empty. Jason approaches and tries to pull him up.

JASON
Come on.

Joshua pulls away.

JOSHUA
What the fuck you talkin' 'bout.

Jason once more grabs him by the arm and forcefully pulls him up.

JASON
Let's go home!

As Jason pulls Joshua away, Joshua reaches back and grabs the bottle of Jack Daniels.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jason pulls Joshua forcefully out of the bar. Joshua swigs from the bottle as he stumbles along.

JASON
You gonna steal from your own Mama. Can't you do right?!

JOSHUA
Like who? Like you?! Rather be locked up for life before I was like your punk ass. Fuckin' mama boy...

JASON
Shut up, man. You just talkin' drunk shit!

JOSHUA
Did I get Jason upset? Whatcha gonna do now? Build another airplane?

Jason explodes. He violently pins his brother against the wall.

JASON
Shut up!

JOSHUA
Let go of me. You ain't my daddy.

As he says this he struggles to be let loose and falls to the ground. He begins to swig from the bottle again.

JOSHUA
I ain't got no daddy.

A blankness covers Jason's face. A memory too painful to forget. Joshua makes a gun with his fingers, aims it at Jason.

JOSHUA
Bang!

Jason then solemnly walks to Joshua, helps him up and they begin homeward.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jason methodically takes off Joshua's shirt and Joshua lies on his side in bed holding the bottle tightly. Jason removes Joshua's shoes and socks. He tries to take the bottle from Joshua. Joshua won't give it up.

JOSHUA
I don't have those dreams no more, Jason.

Jason looks to his brother.

JOSHUA
And it's all cuz' of this.

He raises the bottle. A moment passes and then he takes a swig.

JOSHUA
Aaahh. It's just like garlic, keeps the ghost away.

A beat passes and then Jason begins to pull the covers over Joshua. He tucks him in.

JOSHUA
I don't know what I'd do without you, man.

They stare at each other for a beat. Slowly Joshua begins to fall asleep. Jason watches him for a moment and then religiously begins to head for the incompleted model airplane on his desk.

CUT TO:

INT. BUCKIN' BILLY'S - SUNSET

Elmo sits behind the counter counting up the money. The store is near closing. Jason stands atop a ladder arranging a display.

ELMO
Awe, Dallas, some of the finest asses I seen in Texas. Hell of a job, boy.

Jason continues to work. He doesn't even look to Elmo.

JASON
I can't take it.

ELMO
What?

Elmo slams the cash register shut.

JASON
I just can't take it.

ELMO
You gonna pass up a salaried job, $25,000 a year. Boy, you better have a good reason.

JASON
Don't sweat me, Elmo. I just can't.

ELMO
It's that brother of yours ain't it. Everytime he get out you just start fucking up.

JASON
Mama needs my help and that's what I'm gonna give her.

Jason moves off the ladder onto the floor.

Before Elmo can respond, Ms. Murphy enters with her three grandchildren. The YOUNGEST carries a toy airplane.

MS. MURPHY
Elmo, is my T.V. ready yet?!

ELMO
Come on, Ruth.

They head towards the back. Jason, quiet, checks the volume on a TV. The youngest boy approaches Jason. He's holding a toy airplane.

LITTLE BOY
Mister, you like my plane?

Jason in his own thoughts barely acknowledges the boy.

LITTLE BOY
It's a bad muthufuck... ain't it?

JASON
(chuckles)
Yeah.

LITTLE BOY
(talking non-stop)
Granmama gave it to me. Said my black ass need to get used to flyin'. Last time we flew to Corpus to see my aunt. You know she live up there and I hate my cousins but I had to go. I threw up all over my Granmama's best hat. That's when she bought me the plane. Does that ever happen to you when you fly?

JASON
I don't know. I've never flown before.

LYRIC (O.S.)
Sometimes you don't need a plane to fly.

Jason's taken by surprise. He looks up and discovers LYRIC, an incredibly beautiful black woman in her twenties. Jason's awestruck.

LYRIC
You sell T.V.s?

Speechless, Jason nods yes.

LYRIC
Can I see them?

He nods yes again and they move towards the T.V.s.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCKIN' BILLY'S - SAME DAY

Jason carries a boxed television and moves towards Lyric who's opening the trunk of a white Cadillac. Jason can't take his eyes off Lyric.

LYRIC
Well...

His eyes hold on her as he begins to load the box into the trunk. BANG! He hits his head on the trunk. Lyric shakes her head pitifully. Jason, engulfed in embarrassment, struggles for composure.

JASON
I hope you gotta good man at home waitin' for you.

LYRIC
Jesus that sounds rehearsed.

She rolls her eyes and gets into the car. Jason closes the trunk, removes the keys out of the trunk and goes to her.

JASON
(sincerely)
Can we start over?

LYRIC
We never started in the first place.

JASON
(handing her the keys)
Jason. My name is Jason Alexander.

Lyric grabs her keys but Jason has a hard time letting go.

LYRIC
That's good to know. Now can I have my keys. I'm late for work and my brother needs his car.

Jason lets go of the keys.

JASON
Where you work?

LYRIC
Why, you lookin' for a job.

She STARTS the CAR.

JASON
Naw... I just thought maybe some night we could...

LYRIC
If it's meant to be, you'll find me.

She takes off. Jason, enchanted, stands in a cloud of exhaust smoke.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOOP - NIGHT

Teddy's car, a 1961 Nova, is parked beside the curb in front of the Alexander apartment BLASTING sounds of NWA. RON, a rough-lookin' gangster in his early 20s, sits with Teddy and Rat on the stoop. Teddy tokes from a joint.

Rat eats a honey bun. In the street they see Joshua give TOMMY, a black, sixteen-year-old crack addict, a small plastic bag holding some crack rock in exchange for dollars.

RAT
Tommy one strung out muthafucka. Sixteen years old, man, used to be the smartest nigger on the block.

RON
Couldn't of been that smart.

RAT
So you was in the pen with Josh, huh.

RON
What the fuck does it matter.

Joshua comes back to the stoop. He sits beside them.

TEDDY
How many rocks we got left?

JOSHUA
Two.

TEDDY
We need to re-load. Business doing pretty good this week..

JOSHUA
Word... we done cleared four C-notes just today.

RON
Man, ain't you tired of nickel and dimin' it.

JOSHUA
Why? You got something better?

RON
Just might. Gotta a man can set you straight.

JOSHUA
What's your game.

RON
(raising his hands)
None. You watched my back I'm gonna watch yours.

JOSHUA
I got my gig.

RON
Gigs can always get better. I'll check you later.

Ron turns to leave as Jason pulls up and jumps out of his car wearing his Buckin' Billy's shirt. He eyes Ron as he passes by him.

Joshua, noticing his brother, coolly slips the crack into his pocket. Joshua begins to play a hand-held video game.

JASON
What's happening.

TEDDY
Nigger, not that shirt.

With this Teddy offers Jason a drag from a joint.

JASON
Fuck you. Get that shit out of my face. Rat, toss me a brewski.

Rat tosses Jason a beer. Two B-girls are strutting by the stoop. The guys eye them.

JASON
(to Joshua)
So, you pound the pavement today. You find some work?

JOSHUA
Nigger, why you wanna bring that shit up 'round the stoop.

JASON
'Cause you need to get off your ass and on your feet.

JOSHUA
Come on, G. You know how this economy is. I figured I might as well sit on my ass eyeing the cootchie and wait out this recession.

Rat and Teddy break out in laughter. Jason stares at Joshua all too seriously. Jason grabs Joshua by the arm.

JASON
Let's talk.

As they begin down the block passing gangbangers, B-girls, and others who litter the sidewalk, Jason puts his arm around his little brother.

JASON
You tryin' to play me.

JOSHUA
Come on, man, it was just a joke.

JASON
Well you need to get serious. You need to get a job.

JOSHUA
I'm lookin', man.

JASON
You lookin'?

JOSHUA
I put in four applications today. But people ain't dyin' to hire a bro' fresh out the joint.

JASON
I know.

He pulls a folded newspaper from his back pocket.

JASON
(handing the paper to Josh)
Here. I circled a couple of things.

JOSHUA
I'll check 'em out tomorrow.

Joshua places the paper into his back pocket and they head back for the stoop. Rat yells out to the boys.

RAT
I need a grub partner. I'm hungrier than a tick searching for a doggie's ass.

The boys laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S - NIGHT

Sizzling hot grease quickly fries two eggs.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Denny's employees hustling about. Customers are stuffed in the establishment from wall to wall. They are of all ages, church-going women, drunk hoods, a seventeen-year-old mother and her two children as they lick their ice cream cones.

Amidst the noise and chaos we DISCOVER Lyric. She puts a check on the counter in front of two hoodlum-ish black brothers at the counter.

JELLY, an unattractive twenty-four-year-old and LEVAR, a goofy twenty-two-year-old and Jelly's sidekick.

At the end of the counter we see Alonzo kissing MARTI, a sexy nineteen-year-old with the sassiness of Mae West, she is a fellow waitress, she wears a tight fitting uniform and the hemline has been raised to a mini-skirt level.

JELLY
So, Lyric, when yous gonna be stoppin' with the Mother Teresa thang and start givin' it up to the brothers?

Alonzo, who is in the b.g., hears this and quickly shoots the boys an evil look. Indicating Alonzo, Levar nudges Jelly to shut up.

The boys and Lyric look to Alonzo who approaches. Marti has gone to the backroom. Alonzo begins to smile.

JELLY
(nervously)
Yo, Alonzo, I didn't mean nothin' by it. It was wrong, man, it was wrong...

ALONZO
Naw, Jelly, it was absolutely right. Lyric be wearin' her panties so tight -- she ain't got room to breathe. Maybe if she spread her legs more often she could chill the fuck out.

The boys laugh. Lyric gives him a scathing look. but tries to maintain control by continuing her chores.

ALONZO
(to the boys)
Shut the fuck up!

The boys quickly stop laughing.

ALONZO
(indicating door)
Out.

The boys quickly leave.

Alonzo gives Lyric a satisfied smile. She gives him an angry look and heads back to her work station.

ALONZO
(sarcastic)
What's wrong, lil' sister? They upset you.

She ignores him. He smiles. Alonzo begins to exit. Marti enters.

MARTI
(pouting)
Alonzo.

He turns to her, she approaches him.

MARTI
(pouting)
You leavin'?

He nods yes. She sensuously moves in and gives him a long sloppy kiss.

MARTI
Don't be late.

ALONZO
Yo, even when I'm late, I'm always on time.

He exits. Marti goes back to the counter.

MARTI
Hmmmm. Hmmmm. That man gives me chills.

LYRIC
Just like a horror movie.

MARTI
To give vent now and then to his feelings is a great...
(searching for the word; snapping her fingers with dramatic flair)
... comfort... condolence...

She signals just a moment, pulls a small book from her apron, flips through the pages finding the proper quote.

Lyric, familiar with Marti's pattern, continues moving about.

MARTI
(finding the page)
EASE to man's heart.
(proudly)
Francesco Guicciardini.

LYRIC
Girl... you and those quote books.

MARTI
Don't knock my self-improvement.
Now what you illin' about.

LYRIC
(angrily)
My orthopedic shoes ain't doin' me no good. I'm sick of serving ungrateful hungry Negroes and my period just started.

With this an old couple sitting nearby turns to Lyric looking surprised. She is embarrassed. Marti laughs.

MARTI
Damn! It is terribly amusing how many different climates of feeling one can go through in a day. Anne Marrow Lindberg. Go on, girl, leave early, I'll cover for you.

Lyric begins to gather her things and doesn't notice Jason and Rat enter. Marti notices them and focuses on Jason.

MARTI
Umph. I'd like to rub that boody.

They approach the counter and Marti moves to assist them.

MARTI
Welcome to Denny's, may I help you?

RAT
Yeh, I'll take a hot fudge sundae, some donuts, pancakes with lots of syrup and a rootbeer float.

Marti rolls her eyes. She then waits on Jason, flirtatiously.

MARTI
(to Jason)
And you.

Jason sees Lyric -- he has found her.

MARTI
(loudly)
And you?

Jason continues to stare at Lyric. She looks up and discovers Jason; she rolls her eyes and heads for the door.

LYRIC
(to Marti)
Good night.

MARTI
'Night, Lyric.

JASON
(to himself)
Lyric.

Marti waves to Lyric. Lyric begins to exit.

JASON
Yo, where you goin'?

No response.

JASON
Wait up.

Jason quickly jumps up and begins to follow.

RAT
Jason, man, whassup?

No response. Jason exits. Marti brings another dish to Rat; he turns around and happily indulges.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Exhausted, Lyric waits for her bus to arrive. Jason approaches.

JASON
Mind if I join you?

LYRIC
Maybe.

JASON
Then again... maybe not.

Jason sits on the far end of the bench. She tries to ignore him.

JASON
So where you headin'?

LYRIC
Home.

He slides a little closer to her.

JASON
You said, 'If it was meant to be, I'd find you,' and I did. Guess you waitin' for the bus.

LYRIC
(rolling her eyes)
Really.

He slides even closer. Lyric looks at her watch, anxiously awaiting the bus. Jason begins to laugh; she looks at him, annoyed.

LYRIC
What?

He's moved again. He's beside her.

JASON
Yo... don't you know this bus ain't gonna be on time tonight 'cause this is meant to be. Come on, let me give you a...

Before he can complete his statement the bus pulls in. Lyric gives him a smirk.

JASON
(to himself)
Damn.

She steps onto the bus, then turns toward him.

LYRIC
Guess it wasn't.

She turns back around. The doors close and the bus takes off. Jason quickly regroups and sprints off.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S - NIGHT

Jason rushes into Denny's and runs toward Rat who happily eats his sweets. Jason grabs his keys from the counter.

JASON
(to Rat)

RAT
(mouth full)
Where you goin', man, you my ride.

As Jason rushes toward the door.

JASON
Catch the bus.

Before Jason can exit he notices a young black couple who have just arrived from a date. The GIRL holds roses.

JASON
(to woman)
Yo, I'll give you twenty bucks for those.

GIRL
My roses?! No way.

MAN
Twenty bucks! Sell 'em, baby.

GIRL
No, you just gave me...

Before she can complete her statement the Man grabs the roses and hands them to Jason. Jason gives the Man a twenty, smiles and once again begins to exit.

GIRL
(to Man)
You motherfuckin' Indian giver! I knew I should've listened to my mama!

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

The bus pulls into the stop. Not far behind we see Jason's car pull to the curb.

Lyric exits the bus amidst the various other passengers; she notices Jason, gives a cold roll of the eyes and begins to walk down the street towards home. The street is fairly empty, except for the occasional bum or hooker. Jason pulls up beside her and drives slowly. The sultry sounds of LUTHER VANDROSS's "Can't Be A Fool In Love" seeps from the STEREO. As she walks, she continuously moves in and out of the light.

JASON
Beautiful night isn't it?

LYRIC
(sarcastic)
Magical.

JASON
Damn you cold. You always this difficult?

LYRIC
Can't you find somebody else to harass?!

JASON
Harass? I thought I was being charming.

LYRIC
Wrong.

Silence. She continues to walk.

JASON
Come on, let me give ya a ride.

LYRIC
I don't know who you are. For all I know you a gangsta, and I don't ride with gangstas.

JASON
Yo, I ain't no gangsta. I got a job, know what I'm saying? No colors. No dope. No piece. I sell TVs all day long! Sold you one.

Ignoring him, she continues walking.

JASON
I wear polyester shirts and bow ties. I eat chicken almost every night cuz my mama works at Kentucky. I have nightmares that I'll grow wings and cluck! Is that the life of a gangsta?

Lyric smiles.

JASON
You smiled.

Lyric stops smiling and looks to Jason.

LYRIC
So.

She arrives at her building and begins to approach the entrance. Jason pulls to the curb.

JASON
Lyric.

She turns toward him, impatiently.

JASON
Look, I ain't even gonna ask you on a date. Just hook me up, tell me where you gonna be so I can be there too. If you gonna go to the market, I wanna be in the same aisle. If you gonna go to church, I just wanna be in the back pew. I just wanna see you. I promise I ain't even gonna talk to you. I just want to see you again.

She turns and begins to walk up the steps, stops and without turning to him.

LYRIC
Anywhere?

JASON
Name the place.

She thinks a beat.

LYRIC
The old trestle bridge.

She is heading upward. Elated, Jason gestures success. He heads for his car. Then stops and turns to her.

JASON
That bridge is barely standing. It ain't been used in years.

She turns to him.

LYRIC
That's where I'll be.

JASON
Well... when?

LYRIC
When the sun next leaves footprints across the sky.

JASON
Huh?

LYRIC
Tomorrow night. Seven o'clock.

She turns back to the building. Jason reaches for something in his car and walks towards her.

JASON

He pulls the roses from behind his back. She looks into his eyes a moment then slowly takes one rose out of the bunch leaving him with the others. She begins to head in again. Jason stares toward the door.

INT. GREER DEN - NIGHT

The front door opens and Lyric enters. The room is dark except for the passing car lights and the light from the TELEVISION.

Even in the darkness, we can see that the apartment is decorated with antiques and handmade pillows all done in a very religious way. Lyric approaches the television.

Lying on the couch before the T.V. is ERMA GREER, Lyric's grandmother. She is a slim, attractive and humble woman in her sixties.

She has fallen asleep on the couch. A Bible rests on her chest. Lyric takes the Bible from her grandmother's chest and lays it on a nearby table. Lovingly, she takes off Erma's shoes and covers her with a blanket. As this ensues, the NEWSCAST CONTINUES:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
A newborn baby wrapped in a plastic bag was found dead in a trash bin Sunday...

She moves to the TELEVISION and turns it OFF. Screen goes to black.

CUT TO:

INT. LYRIC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Her walls are scattered with posters -- Renoir, Cezanne, and various works by black artists. She's straightening her room. Art supplies are scattered about her room. On the vanity sits Jason's rose in a vase. Erma enters.

ERMA
You home already. I thought you were working a double shift.

LYRIC
I was tryin' to. Then Alonzo showed up. I can't even believe we're related because he's so hateful.

Lyric straightens her art supplies.

ERMA
Your brother's just a little wild at heart

LYRIC
Half-brother.

She gathers more things.

LYRIC
He's a gangster.

ERMA
Nonsense.

LYRIC
Well, what do you call someone who sleeps on the couch till two or three in the afternoon, then hangs with his homies gettin' drunk, but always has cash in his pocket. Grandma, he's an ass...

ERMA
He's my grandson.

A tense beat as they stare at each other. Lyric picks up a book and heads to a bookshelf by the window.

ERMA
You work too hard. You need to go out more.

As Lyric puts the book onto the shelf:

LYRIC
For what? Nobody around here really understands me.

Lyric's attention is drawn to the window. She gazes out. A beat.

LYRIC
He was right. It is a beautiful night. I don't think I've ever seen stars as bright. I think I'll make a wish.

ERMA
(thoughtfully)
You are a dreamer. Just like your mama.

Lyric continues to look towards the sparkling night sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jason lies in bed. the leftover roses sit on his night-

The sounds of the outside STREET LIFE penetrating the thin walls. He looks about the room at the airplanes and weaponry that line the wall. Soon he hears a GUNSHOT BLAST outside, his head stops still for a moment and then he looks over to Joshua's empty bed.

CUT TO:

INT. LYRIC'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lyric lies in bed in deep thought. She picks up the rose. She will sleep with it tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jason lies in bed staring at the roses on his nightstand. He is thinking of Lyric.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRESTLE BRIDGE - SUNSET

The HORNS of CARGO SHIPS and SHRIMP BOATS are heard as they head into the harbor. This is an industrial area: Factories with smoke escaping into the sky, plants ROARING with the sounds of MACHINERY, and desolate warehouses surround a small lake. In the distance we DISCOVER a bridge that crosses the channel, someone sits on its edge. As we MOVE CLOSER we DISCOVER that the bridge rises 40 feet into the sky, it is old and corroded. Many railings are missing and those that are still in place are rusted to the core. But beneath it all we know it was once beautiful. The person sitting atop the bridge is Lyric, she looks out on the world awestruck. She looks down as we DISCOVER Jason, he stands beside his car below and looks up to Lyric confused.

LYRIC
So are you comin' or what?

JASON
Why don't you come down.

LYRIC
All you gotta do is climb up here.

JASON
I ain't bothered 'bout the climbin'. It's the fallin' I'm worried about.

LYRIC
You said anywhere

JASON
Well when I said that I didn't mean ten stories above the ground.

LYRIC
It's only about five. So I'm waiting?

They look at each other for a moment and then Lyric begins to look outward again. Jason ponders the thought and shakes his head as he hesitantly begins to climb the metal railings on the side of the bridge.

Jason stands beside the railing contemplating whether or not he should climb over to the ledge. Lyric looks at him, her glance indicates to him that she expects him to. He gives a look of resignation as he reluctantly climbs over the safety rail and sits beside her. He holds on tightly to the edge, nervous.

JASON
Yo, this is some crazy shit.

LYRIC
Ssshh.

She continues to look outward, ignoring him. He watches her confused. A beat. Her intense gaze outward demands he follow suit.

THEIR POV

The highway escapes into the distance disappearing into the rural countryside. Smoke escapes the exhaust of a Greyhound bus that travels the road, heading away from Houston.

ANGLE

LYRIC
So where do you think it's going?

JASON
What?

LYRIC
The bus.

JASON
I don't know.

LYRIC
Neither do I. Isn't it great?!

JASON

LYRIC
Not knowing. I mean you see a bus pass and all you know is that it's going, but where... where can be anyplace you want. It's kind of like dreaming.

JASON
Yo... you contemplatin' suicide. You gonna jump?!

LYRIC
I knew you wouldn't understand.

A beat.

JASON
Sho' is pretty up here.

No response.

JASON
Yo, I ain't never sat on no bridge before. I can see for days.

No response.

JASON
So I guess you come here a lot.

LYRIC
Best place in town to watch the sunset.
(points to the sunset)
Look at that.

They both watch the sunset.

LYRIC
It's like the water is swallowing the sun. That used to scare me when I was a little girl. Until my mother told me, 'Lyric, if the water swallowed the sun it would kill itself, 'cuz it's just like you and me, night and day -- inseparable.'

JASON
So where she now?

LYRIC
Who?

JASON
Your mama.

LYRIC
She died.

A beat.

LYRIC
But it's alright. Every night I just watch the sunset.

They continue to watch the sunset.

JASON
I don't think I've ever really watched a sunset before.

Jason continues to stare at the sunset. Lyric looks to him, smiles and excitedly jumps up, grabs her backpack and puts it on. She begins to confidently walk along the ledge of the bridge, with her arms outstretched. Jason remains seated and watches her in awe.

JASON
Lyric. I just got with the program, now we out?

LYRIC
Come on.

Jason carefully and nervously gets up and begins to follow. He tries to keep his cool and imitate her walk, but we know he is scared to death.

JASON
Alright. I'm gonna do this stupid shit, but only 'cuz I said I'd follow you.

Lyric turns to him smiling.

LYRIC
Shut up and hurry up.

They continue. He looks ridiculous as he walks the ledge. Jason sings nervously, trying to charm her.

JASON
(sings)
'I will follow you. To wherever you may go. It may be a river too deep, it may be a mountain...'

Lyric laughs as he continues to sing.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH - DAY

Jason follows Lyric as they walk beneath the bridge along a narrow and cracked sidewalk that runs beside the channel. On both sides of the sidewalk are towering weeds.

As they continue to walk the weeds grow thicker and thicker. Lyric is excited, Jason however seems out of his element as he slaps at mosquitoes and tries to figure out where they are. He slaps his neck, trying to kill a mosquito.

JASON
Goddamn! Lil' motherfuckers trying to eat me alive. What we doin' out here?

LYRIC
What you can't handle it?

JASON
Ahhh, I know what's up.

He begins to laugh to himself.

LYRIC
Is that right.

JASON
You takin' me into the woods so you can have your way with me. You want a nibble don't you?

LYRIC
Only thing that's gonna be nibbling on you today is them mosquitos.

JASON
(flirting)
It was just my imagination, running away with me.

LYRIC
Don't sing again!

Jason smiles. Lyric leads as they head into an underpass.

Jason stops and begins to examine a wall that is covered with incredible drawings with brilliant colors.

JASON
You did this, didn't you?

Lyric turns to him, smiling and approaches.

LYRIC
(pointing to the wall)
This is the sun...

Jason puts his finger to his lips and leans in close to her.

JASON
Ssshh. I know. Inseparable.

They deeply stare into each other's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

We MOVE ACROSS several cars that are jammed bumper to bumper on the busy highway.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

We soon come to Jason, he sits patiently in the traffic. Lyric is fast asleep in the passenger seat, she looks beautiful. He turns ON the RADIO, a song is coming to an end and a NEWS BROADCAST begins.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
District Attorney Carter expressed concern at the increasing trend of violent bank robberies. Statistics show...

Jason, disgusted, shakes his head -- this is not the time for bad news.

He changes the station and the soulful sounds of AL GREEN'S "Love Will Make You Come Home Early" exudes from the speakers. He looks over to Lyric and smiles. He is in heaven. He slowly places his hand atop hers. The traffic continues to move, slowly.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYRIC'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Jason pulls the car to the curb and parks. Lyric is still asleep.

JASON
We're back.

Slowly Lyric begins to wake up, she moves her head a bit, smiles and opens her eyes. A moment of silence as they look into each other's eyes.

JASON
For a moment, I forgot we were in the Harbor.

LYRIC
I know.

Another moment passes.

JASON
So when can I see you again. You know, I was thinking maybe we could go to the movies, maybe even dancing.

LYRIC
I just took you on an adventure and you wanna take me to the movies. You gotta do better than that.

JASON
Like what?

LYRIC
I don't know. Surprise me.

CUT TO:

He leans in to kiss her. She jumps out of the car.

INT. ROOFTOP - EARLY EVENING

Sheets are billowing on several clotheslines on the tenement building roof. Behind one of the larger white sheets that rhythmically rides the currents of the night breeze we see Jason helping Gloria fold a sheet.

ANGLE - GLORIA AND JASON

GLORIA
I can't remember the last time you helped me with the laundry, what's going on?

Jason thinks a moment.

JASON
Question, if you wanted a man to take you someplace special, where would that be?

GLORIA
You met somebody.

JASON
I didn't say all dat.

GLORIA
What's she like.

JASON
(smiles)
Damn... Female intuition!

Gloria laughs.

GLORIA
Well...

JASON
Can't get a take on her. It's like one minute she dissin' me and giving up a hard time and the next minute she's showing me things I ain't ever seen before.

A smile covers Gloria's face.

GLORIA
You like her don't you?

No response.

GLORIA
Maddog took me on a picnic once. Couldn't afford a blanket so we used a sheet, kinda like this one. I believe that's the day I fell in love with him. Something special about picnics.

A beat.

GLORIA
So what's her name?

JASON
Lyric.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER APARTMENT - NIGHT

RAP MUSIC ECHOES throughout the house. The stove is covered with various pots simmering. CAMERA PULLS BACK and we DISCOVER Joshua hustling about the kitchen. He hurriedly carries various pots to the dinner table which is already covered with enough food to feed an army. He seems happy and excited. Jason and Gloria enter laughing. Jason carries a basket of laundry. Jason gets a whiff of the incredible scents and begins to smile. Joshua smiles

JOSHUA
Yo... welcome to the Hotel Alexander.

JASON
Joshua's throwin' down. Save some for me. I'm a take a quick shower.

Jason hurries towards the bathroom. Gloria looks to Joshua coldly. Joshua happily continues to take dishes to the table. Gloria quickly charges the table and just as he puts down a bowl of greens, she picks it up and scrapes it into the trash.

JOSHUA
What are you doing?

Gloria doesn't respond. She goes to the table and grabs another dish and dumps it. Joshua follows her.

JOSHUA
Come on, Mama, I made this for you!

She glares at him and then charges the table again. She retrieves another dish and heads for the trash.

JOSHUA
Stop it now. I just bought this shit!

Gloria glares at him.

GLORIA
With drug money.

She dumps the dish in the trash and as she heads back to the table. Joshua follows.

JOSHUA
See, how you know I didn't get it an honest way?! How you know that!

Gloria picks up another dish and as she angrily scrapes it into the trash.

GLORIA
Every time you come out I pray it's gonna be different. But it's always the same. Always the same.

She heads for the table again. Gloria picks up the pot roast.

JOSHUA
Not the roast, Mama, I spent

She heads for the trash, he quickly follows and struggles for the roast.

JOSHUA
What are you doin'? Stop it!

With this he grabs the roast and pushes her away.

JOSHUA
I spend a hundred dollars on this shit! A hundred goddamn dollars to make you happy! A hundred dollars, Mama!

Gloria is seething mad.

GLORIA
Drug money.
(spits at the thought)
Drug money!

As she continues, she stands directly in Joshua's face.

GLORIA
I'll die. You hear me I'll die before I feed my family with that money. And if you ever bring it into my house again, the doors will be locked.

JOSHUA
(coldly)
Now I see how a man could beat you.

Quick as lightning, Gloria slaps him. Joshua turns back towards Gloria, we now see rage that reminds us of Maddog. He rears back to strike his mother, a hand catches him from behind.

It is Jason wearing only a towel wrapped around his waist. Gloria is completely devastated, she stares at Joshua. His eyes are watering as though he is about to crumble.

GLORIA
(to Joshua)
I knew Maddog's ghost was somewhere to be found, but I had no idea it was in my own house.

A long beat as they stare at each other, all we hear is the TICKING of the CEILING FAN. It looks as though Joshua is about to break down and cry. He pulls himself away from Jason and with one swoop ransacks the table, everything crashes to the floor. He storms into the bedroom slamming the door behind him.

INT. BOYS' ROOM - LATER

Jason enters the room and Joshua lies in bed staring at the ceiling. We still hear the TICKING of the CEILING FAN, it is like a bomb.

JASON
She didn't mean it.

A beat.

JOSHUA
What does it feel like, Jason?

JASON
What?

JOSHUA
To make her smile?

JASON
Who?

JOSHUA
Mama.

Jason approaches Joshua's bed. Joshua jumps from the bed and walks toward the window.

JOSHUA
I know I fuck up sometimes but I'm tryin'. I'm tryin' to do things right, man. I really am. I'm tryin'. Guess you got dibs on that territory.
(a beat)
You know, I don't think I eva made Mama smile. I'd like that. I'd like to make her smile.

Jason looks to his brother, thoughtfully.

JASON
When was the last time you smiled?

Joshua turns and faces Jason.

JOSHUA
I don't remember.

Joshua grabs a jacket and leaves.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Lyric sits at her regular bus stop patiently waiting. Although tired, she looks extremely beautiful.

She wears a loose-fitting short floral dress that somehow still complements her incredible body. Her uniform sits in her lap. She has let her hair down and it falls to her shoulder, tossled, but sexy. A bus rolls up and the door slides open. Lyric begins to climb the steps of the bus. The BUS DRIVER'S face is covered by the rim of his hat. She begins to drop her coin into the meter, quickly the driver places his hand atop it.

BUS DRIVER
This rides on me.

The driver lifts his head and smiles at her, it is Jason. Lyric is shocked.

LYRIC
Jason?!

JASON
Would you please take a seat.
(points to a sign)
No talkin' to the driver.

LYRIC
What are you doing?!

JASON
You wanted a surprise.

LYRIC
Well I didn't mean go steal a bus?!

JASON
(calmly)
Just chill out. Now why don't you have a seat and enjoy the ride. My man hooked me up.

He motions to the back of the bus, Lyric turns around and discovers the real bus driver sittin' in the far back. She turns back to Jason and sits down. Jason begins to put the bus in gear.

LYRIC
You know how to drive one of these things?

JASON
Easy as cake.

He pulls the lever to close the door, it is stuck.

JASON
There's a gas pedal, there's a brake pedal. Hey, don't gotta be a rocket scientist.

He pulls again, it's still stuck. Lyric restrains her laughter. A MIDDLE-AGED OVERWEIGHT WOMAN runs to the bus, she pants for breath. The doors are now opening and closing, uncontrollably. Jason struggles with them.

JASON
I'm sorry, ma'am, this bus broke.

He continues to struggle with the door. The real DRIVER walks INTO FRAME. With one simple move he shuts the door.

BUS DRIVER
Why don't you go take care of the lady, and I'll take care of the wheel.

Jason smiles and goes to sit with Lyric.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

The bus is parked in front of an old bus station that is grand in design, obviously built in the 1920s.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lyric is blindfolded. Jason busily leads her down the aisle.

LYRIC
I can't believe you talked me into this.

JASON
We're almost there.

They pass the bus driver. Jason hands him a twenty, and they smile to one another. Lyric continues.

LYRIC
Where?

JASON
You'll see.

INT. BUS STATION - TIGHT ON JASON AND LYRIC - NIGHT

who's still blindfolded. We cannot see their surroundings.

LYRIC
Look... if you don't take this thing off of me...

Jason quickly removes the blindfold. She is awestruck. The bus station is grand in design. Beneath the dust we can still distinguish gold leaf moldings of the past, the windows are broken, but we can still make out the remnants of the incredible designs that once graced the stained-glass windows, a cathedral ceiling with water stains.

The benches are a beautiful mahogany, but have been flawed by the etchings of a knife, the floor an incredible marble that has cracked in many places over the years. A janitor sweeps the floor. Two homeless men sleep on benches. A homeless woman sits in a corner, in her own world. In spite of all of this the beauty of the establishment cannot be denied. Lyric walks around looking at all of this, astounded. In the b.g., we see Jason smiling.

She looks to Jason happily, and then continues to look around. Jason approaches her, takes her by the hand and leads her to an open area beyond the benches. It's surrounded by candles. Surprise covers her face.

LYRIC'S POV

On the floor lies a beautiful lace cloth. Atop it: A burning candle, a bottle of wine, two wine glasses and cartons of Chinese food.

BACK TO SCENE

Lyric looks to Jason amazed.

JASON
Would you like to have a picnic?

She smiles, leans in and kisses him.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS STATION - LATER

Jason and Lyric laugh as they continue their picnic. MUSIC PLAYS from a JAM BOX. The bottle of wine is half-empty. Lyric guides some food with chopsticks toward Jason.

LYRIC
Open up.

He opens his mouth and she feeds him. It's very sensuous. Lyric gathers another bite with the chopsticks.

LYRIC
This is a surprise. I love it here.

JASON
I know.

She feeds him again. She leans in and wipes his mouth. Their eyes meet.

DISSOLVE TO:

JASON AND LYRIC

are dancing. They hold each other closely, as they fall in love. The homeless woman rocks back and forth and smiles as she watches them. Jason pulls back a little and looks at Lyric.

JASON
What do you want in a man?

A beat. Lyric thinks. She looks up at Jason.

LYRIC
(slowly; thinking as she speaks)
I want a man who's sensitive and strong. I want a man who's not afraid to feel. I want a man who won't break my heart.

They continue dancing. A beat.

LYRIC
And he's gotta have good breath.

Jason gently breathes into her face.

LYRIC
Well... you've fulfilled one requirement.

She laughs. They continue dancing.

LYRIC
One day I'm gonna be standing here waiting for a bus and I'm gonna go everywhere. The ocean, the opera, museums. I'm gonna stand barefoot in the lobby...

Lyric pulls away from Jason. She begins to twirl in circles.

LYRIC
... and just twirl and twirl.

JASON
You're leaving?

She stops twirling and looks at him.

LYRIC
(with hope)
One day.

Lyric playfully approaches him.

LYRIC
(excitedly)
Don't you ever think about it, Jason. The world.

Jason looks at her a moment, turns off the jambox and then begins to gather up all the things.

JASON
Naw. I'm too busy thinking about the here and now.

Ignoring her, he continues packing the things.

JASON
So you just go ahead and run barefoot through the countryside. I got business to tend to.

He throws the bag over his shoulder and looks to her.

JASON
I hope you have a good ride.

Jason exits. Lyric looks after him, stunned.

EXT. LYRIC'S STREET - NIGHT

Jason and Lyric walk down the street in uncomfortable silence. Her apartment complex is across the street.

LYRIC
Why are you even walking me home? You haven't said a word since we left the bus station.

JASON
To make sure you get there safely.

LYRIC
Well don't waste your time. I got myself home safe before I met you and I can do it now.

JASON
Fine.

LYRIC
I don't know what the fuck your problem is.

Before Jason has a chance to respond, Lyric runs across the street towards her building. Jason follows but a large truck rushing down the street forces him back to the curb. When it passes Jason discovers that Lyric has disappeared. He looks towards her door for a beat, upset. He then turns and violently kicks a garbage can.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

The park seems victimized by vandalism. What once was a child's playground is now a gathering point for loud music, drunken fun and violence. In the middle of the playground are rows of cars parked side by side. The owners can be seen hanging out talking to the ladies who walk by. Our attention is drawn to Alonzo, Marti, Ron and his date -- SHAWANDA, a raunchy B-girl full of attitude. Marti busily paints her nails.

ALONZO
Why you gotta do that shit anyway?! Cheap ass nail polish gettin' me stoned. Ain't nothin' worse than gettin' stoned by accident!

Ron laughs.

MARTI
Cheap! Nigger, I paid ninety-five cents for this polish! And do you see a ring on my finger?! I don't! And until there's a ring on my finger I can do whatever I damn well please!

ALONZO
Shut the fuck up!

MARTI
What?!

ALONZO
Shut the fuck up!

MARTI
Nigger, let me tell you one goddamn thang! I am sick and tired of being sick and tired... Fannie Lou Hammer... of your ass tryin' to run shit.

She defiantly looks at Alonzo.

MARTI
Hell, you don't scare me! Hateful is the power and... and...
(snapping her fingers in the air; grasping the word)
pitiable is the life of those who wish to be feared rather than loved!
(to Shawanda)
Would you close up the polish? I don't wanna wreck my nails.

Shawana closes the polish.

MARTI
(to Shawanda)
Come on, girl. Let's go check out the other prospects.

Marti rolls her eyes at Alonzo.

MARTI
(to Alonzo)
We'll be back.

The girls leave.

ALONZO
(to himself)
Crazy bitch.

RON
Yo, A-1. I been meanin' to talk to you. There's somebody I want you to meet.

CUT TO.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Joshua, Rat and Teddy stand beside Joshua's car drinking beers and cat-calling girls that pass. Alonzo and Ron approach them.

RON
Josh, check it out. This is my man Alonzo.

Alonzo and Joshua shake hands. Teddy and Rat look on.

ALONZO
I heard you lookin' to get paid.

JOSHUA
Already gettin' paid.

ALONZO
Just not enough, right.
(to Ron)
Set up a meeting.
(to Joshua)
We'll talk.

Jason walks INTO FRAME.

JASON
Whassup.

No one responds. Jason looks at Alonzo, suspiciously and reaches out to shake his hand.

JASON
I'm Jason, Josh's brother. What ya'll up to?

ALONZO
Just hanging, man.
(to Joshua)
Later.

Alonzo and Ron leave.

JASON
(to Joshua; suspicious)
So who's that?

JOSHUA
Just a friend.

Teddy and Rat begin to cat-call to the women, once again. Trying to break the tension. Jason grabs a beer and sits on the edge of the car sinking deeper and deeper in thought. Soon LOLA approaches with several other B-girls.

RAT
Damn... ya'll look fresher than a honey bun when the glaze is just melting.

The B-girls roll their eyes, ignore Rat, and walk over to Teddy and Josh. Lola flirtatiously approaches Jason.

LOLA
I've been waitin' for a good man. You said you'd call me.

JASON
Lola, we don't got nothin' to talk about.

LOLA
For your information I've been told that I'm one of the best conversationalists around.

JASON
Is that right?

LOLA
Um-hum. Talk to me.

JASON
Alright. Lola, what do you want in a man.

She chews gum pondering this.

LOLA
What do I want in a man? Let's see. First of all he has got to look correct. I can't have no homely-lookin' man. And he's got to have a pocket full of money -- 'cuz I need thangs. And he's got to be a champ in bed.

She blows him a kiss.

JASON
And what else.

LOLA
What else is there?

Suddenly Lola recognizes a SONG she loves playing from a nearby car. She begins to dance, excitedly. Jason looks on shaking his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYRIC'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Jason standing in front of the fire escape jumps up trying to grab the bottom rung of the ladder. He's carrying his jam box. He readies to jump again but stops when a man passes by. He jumps again and finally grabs it. He starts up the fire escape.

INT. LYRIC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sheer white curtains rhythmically ride the currents of the hot Texan winds that enter through her open window. Lyric lies in bed, barely covered by a white sheet. She stares toward the ceiling with eyes of contemplation.

CAMERA PANS TO window. Jason stands before it staring at Lyric for a long moment. He sets down the JAM BOX on a nearby dresser and pushes play. Softly the SONG from their unfinished dance PLAYS. Slowly Lyric turns and discovers Jason.

JASON
(softly)
We didn't finish our dance.

They look at each other. Slowly he walks to Lyric, takes her hand. She rises. Her simple white cotton nightgown caresses the curves of her body. They dance. The song comes to an end. He leans in and they kiss passionately.

JASON
(whispering)
I'd better go now.

He kisses her gently then heads for the window. She watches him as he leaves.

EXT. RODEO ARENA - CLOSE ON RAGING BULL - NIGHT

Bursting out of the chute. He's ridden by a black cowboy. The crowd goes wild.

Colorful posters and banners celebrating JUNETEENTH DAY surround the rink. (The holiday commemorates the abolition of slavery in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma. The Emancipation Proclamation didn't cover these states and slavery wasn't abolished until a separate decree was issued at a later date. Today the annual celebration promotes black pride and culture.)

PULL BACK to reveal a mid-sized carnival surrounding the small rodeo arena. There are amusement rides, games, food vendors, and exhibitions. The sounds of RAP, HIP-HOP, GOSPEL and AFRICAN DRUMS fill the air.

PAN INTO chicken chasing patch.

EXT. FESTIVAL (CHICKEN CHASING PATCH) - SAME TIME

Gun in the air.

The CAP GUN FIRES and we discover Jason and several other participants chasing chickens.

Hilariously, Jason chases the chickens continuously falling in the mud as he grabs for the poultry. CAMERA PULLS BACK and we DISCOVER Lyric standing amid other onlookers on the side of the fence. She laughs as she watches this comical fiasco.

CUT TO:

EXT. RODEO ARENA - NIGHT

CAMERA MOVES THROUGH the crowd and we DISCOVER Joshua, Rat, and Teddy penetrating the onlookers as they climb towards the top bleacher approaching Alonzo, who sits with his crew. Joshua and the boys stand directly in front of Alonzo and his crew.

ALONZO
So I heard you a nigger who ain't afraid to bleed.

RON
Josh ain't to be flexed with. Muthafucka has much heart. Back 'n the cage he beat down four muthafuckas who tryin' to jack my shit.

JOSHUA
(cocky)
Straight up... I'm down with the thug life.

The crowd around them cheers wildly as the bull bucks.

ALONZO
Nigger, with me you could make 3000 in one night.

JOSHUA
I'm listenin'.

ALONZO
Bank robbin'. I already done three gigs. Easy as takin' candy from a baby.

JOSHUA
Why you need me.

ALONZO
I don't. I'm just tryin' to do a favor for my boy.
(pointing to Ron)
He says he owes you.

JOSHUA

ALONZO
You do that.
(dismissing)
Now why don't you boys go play. I'm tryin' to watch this bullheaded muthafucka get his ass whipped.

Joshua looks cynically at Alonzo. Joshua begins the descent down the bleachers. Rat and Teddy follow.

JOSHUA
Muthafucka think he bad.

RAT
(to Josh)
Man, why you wanna get in business with him.

TEDDY
For real, man. Sales are doin' good and we got plenty more where that come from and you the boss man.

JOSHUA
You right. I don't need that nigger.

They continue down the bleachers.

CUT TO:

EXT. FESTIVAL - RIDES - NIGHT

We hear POUNDING RAP MUSIC from a nearby tent. The long line waiting for the scrambler moves as people rush to different cars. Jason and Lyric get into a car, they are laughing, mid-conversation.

LYRIC
I can't believe you talked me into this. I hate these rides.

JASON
(flicking a chicken feather off his shirt sleeve)
You think I love chasin' chickens. Whassup... you afraid?

He moves closer to her and puts his arm around her.

JASON
Don't sweat it... I'll take care of you.

LYRIC
I take care of myself just fine, thank you.

JASON
I'll take care of you better.

Jason holds her eyes for a moment. Then she looks away. Jason sees Rat sitting in another car across from Jason. He eats a candied apple, a 19-year-old B-girl sits by his side.

JASON
Yo, Rat.

RAT
Whassup, homie? How ya'll hangin'?

JASON
We cool... where's Joshua at?

RAT
He somewhere around here.

The ride operator begins to lock people into their cars. Jason turns back to Lyric.

JASON
You scared?

LYRIC
I feel perfectly safe.

Jason leans in to kiss her. Before he can Joshua squeezes into their car. He's drunk.

JOSHUA
Jason... whassup? I been lookin' for you.

Confused, Lyric looks to Jason who isn't pleased at Joshua's arrival. The operator locks their door.

JOSHUA
(to Lyric)
What's your name, baby?

Before Lyric can respond.

JASON
(protectively)
Lyric.

Uncomfortable, Jason attempts to introduce his brother.

JASON
This is my brother...

JOSHUA
(interrupting)
That's a fuckin' beautiful name, man.

Joshua looks at Lyric.

JOSHUA
It's a fuckin' beautiful name.

Quick as lightning the ride begins. They begin to whirl about sliding from side to side, passing the other cars. They are laughing in excitement. Jason and Lyric are looking straight ahead, Joshua is eyeing Lyric. The ride continues to go faster and faster. They fly past Rat and his girl. They're screaming at the top of their lungs. Joshua puts his arm behind Lyric. They are going even faster, it is dizzying.

Jason turns to discover Teddy and a B-girl in a car not too far behind. Joshua moves his hand towards Lyric's breast. She attempts to shake his hand off of her. Jason waves at Teddy and doesn't notice. Joshua moves his other hand onto her knee. She tries to shake it off, but she can't. Fear covers her face.

LYRIC
What are you doing.

Jason turns around and sees Lyric trying to shake Joshua's hand off of her.

He quickly knocks Joshua's hand away from Lyric and pulls her close in to him. Joshua laughs. The ride continues to whip them around. She shoots a look to Joshua. She's about to explode. The ride slows down and then stops. The operator unlocks their door.

LYRIC
Let me out. Now!

Joshua steps off the ride. Lyric storms past him. Jason quickly gets off the ride and pounds his brother in the chest.

JASON
What the fuck is your problem?

JOSHUA
(stumbles a little)
What you talkin' 'bout, man?

Teddy, the B-girl, Rat and his girl approach, laughing, excited by the thrill of the ride. Jason pushes Joshua again.

JASON
(pushing him again)
Keep your fuckin' hands off her.

Jason begins towards Lyric.

JOSHUA
Is the pussy that good, J. Does she take it up the ass.

Furiously Jason whips around and charges him. They fall to the ground and fight furiously. In the background Teddy, Rat and the girls stand beside Lyric, watching. Jason gets the better of Joshua. He straddles Joshua, holding him by the collar.

JOSHUA
I was just fuckin' jokin', man.

Jason pounds Joshua's head into the ground and holds his collar even tighter.

JASON
That's all you are is a joke. A mutha fuckin' joke.

TEDDY
Come on, Jason, man, chill.

Jason doesn't hear. He pounds Joshua's head once more.

JASON
You think you a man, huh. You think you a bad ass.

JOSHUA
Come on, man, I'm sorry.

Jason continues again.

JASON
You ain't nothin' but a two-bit dope hustler.

LYRIC
Jason, he's apologized.

JASON
He didn't mean it.

Grabbing Joshua's collar even tighter.

LYRIC
(taking his arm)
Yes, he did.

JASON
(pulling away)
How do you know when my brother's tellin' the truth. You don't know what the fuck you're talkin' about.

Jason pops Joshua upside the head.

JASON
When you gonna stop fuckin' up.

JOSHUA
Come on, man, we in front of my crew.

JASON
Your crew of what. Nigger, you can't even get paid.

JASON
I can get paid, man.

JASON
Why don't you show me, mutha fucka.

With this Jason pitifully releases him. Jason stands panting for breath. Surprised by his own rage. He looks for Lyric. She's gone. Angry and embarrassed, Joshua rises, composing himself. He storms off.

EXT. FESTIVAL - SHOOTING RANGE - CLOSE ON BLACK HAND - NIGHT

pulls the trigger of a RIFLE. BOOM. We PULL BACK and DISCOVER Alonzo standing amidst a row of other contestants as he shoots with intense concentration. He scores again and again.

Joshua approaches from behind. He grabs Alonzo by the arm and turns him towards him.

JOSHUA
Count me the fuck in.

ALONZO
(smiles)
You made the right decision, my brother.

He coolly looks back to the target and pulls the trigger. BOOM! Bull's-eye.

CUT TO:

INT. LYRIC'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erma sits on her couch watching TELEVISION. She wears a facial mask and her hair is in rollers; she rubs ointment onto her aching hands. Lyric enters holding a bag. As she hangs her purse and removes her coat:

ERMA
How was the festival?

LYRIC
Same as last year.

ERMA
What's in the bag?

LYRIC
Toothpaste.

Lyric walks toward the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lyric puts some toothpaste onto her toothbrush and begins to brush her teeth, angrily. Erma enters and stands in the doorway.

ERMA
You always brush when you're upset. You and Jason have a fight?

LYRIC
(as she brushes)
One minute he's gentle and then next he's full of rage. I don't understand it and I'm tired of trying. We're over.

She spits. Looks to Erma.

LYRIC
I mean I'm hitting my head against a wall. We're over.

ERMA
You've already said that.

LYRIC
I just wanna make it clear.

She begins to brush. Erma approaches her and stands beside her.

ERMA
Rage comes from pain. When you love...

LYRIC
Who said anything about love?

ERMA
Do you love him?

Lyric looks at Erma for a long moment and then begins to brush again.

ERMA
When you love someone who's in pain, you don't walk away, you pull them closer.

Lyric continues to brush. Erma watches her for a moment and then leaves. Once Erma has left, Lyric stops brushing and looks to the door, thoughtfully.

CUT TO:

INT. ELMO'S - NIGHT

Rows and rows of TELEVISIONS project the images of VARIOUS TELEVISION PROGRAMS. Jason kneels before the display counter cleaning the counterside glass. The store is closed. No more customers. Even Elmo is gone. Jason's the only one in the store. The entrance BELL RINGS. In the glass Jason sees Lyric's reflection as she enters. Jason turns toward her. They stare at each other for a long moment.

LYRIC
You know... you and me... we have a problem. I'm fallin' in love with you. But I feel like I'm lookin' at you across a river and I just can't get to the other side. I've crossed many bridges, Jason, but I don't know how to cross this one. You gotta help me.

A beat.

JASON
I've never felt the way I feel about you before. I know it's a good thing. But I just can't seem to hold onto it. I feel it slippin' through my fingers like water.

LYRIC
If you want to hold me... I'm right here.

She moves to him. She gently touches the bruises on his face. She bends in and sensuously kisses and licks them. He takes Lyric in his arms and pulls her in tightly. As he gently kisses her neck, she pushes the straps of her dress from her shoulders. The dress falls to the ground. He kisses down towards her breasts. Then her stomach. He pulls her down and climbs atop her. They make love.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELMO'S - NIGHT

The only source of lighting -- the flickering rows of TELEVISIONS. All is quiet. CAMERA PANS UP the entwined naked bodies of Jason and Lyric. They glisten with sweat.

JASON
Stay with me.

LYRIC
Here?

JASON
I'm so tired. Tonight I just wanna sleep without nightmares.

A beat. He moves closer into her, nestling in her bosom. She cradles him.

LYRIC
Don't you ever dream.

A beat.

JASON
No.
(a beat)
Teach me.

She begins to caress his hair. Slowly his eyes begin to close.

LYRIC
(whispering)
Sleep well.

She stares up at the ceiling.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Lyric and Jason speed down a two-lane highway that seems to go on forever. As they speed down the road, they leave the confines of the inner-city, they pass oil refineries and windmills. The landscape is slowly changing from urban to rural.

JASON
You sure there's a bayou out here.

LYRIC
Positive. Wait 'til you see it.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Lyric wears a dress of light material, easily caressed by the breeze. A scarf is draped over her hair and wrapped about her neck, its loose ends blowing in the wind. She wears sunglasses.

JASON
We both gonna be waitin' if I run out of gas.

LYRIC
If we do, we'll walk. But today we're going to the bayou. You've never seen land more green. It's like the Garden of Eden, you'll see.

JASON
Yeah... the Garden of Eden also had a serpent.

LYRIC
If you don't bother them, they won't bother you.

They smile at each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jason's car continues speeding down the highway.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

Nature was never more alive. The CACOPHONY of INSECTS competes with the WHISTLING BREEZE and the RUSHING GRASSES.

An egret feeds. Lyric rides piggyback on Jason.

JASON
Damn... it's so quiet out here. I shoulda brought my radio.

LYRIC
It's not quiet. It's full of music... listen.

NATURE'S ORCHESTRA plays a resounding symphony.

LYRIC
My Mama believed that everything in life was musical. Every moment, every day, composed a rhythmic melody and those special times... they were the lyrics that gave meaning to the music.

JASON
(realizing)
Lyric.

Lyric smiles at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

Jason chases Lyric. He catches her and they fall to the ground laughing. He's on top of her. He pins her arms down.

JASON
I'm a lucky man.

LYRIC
You just realizin' that.

He smiles.

JASON
I bet you're ticklish.

LYRIC
(emphatically)
Nope!

JASON
I bet you are.

He begins to tickle her. She laughs. They roll over and over.

LYRIC
Stop it. Stop it.

They roll over and over. She ends up on top of him. Out of breath, they look into each other's eyes.

She kisses him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

Lyric stands on the large branch of a fallen tree. Her dress blows behind her. Jason looks at her.

LYRIC
I'm in Paris. I'm standing in the grandest palace wearing a flawless gown. It's fuschia... with rhinestones and emeralds and a long, long train.
(looking behind herself)
Be careful... don't step on it.
(turning back)
All the men gaze at me admiringly. All the women green with envy. And I look up and there across the room I see...

She gestures for Jason to partake.

JASON
(unsure)
Me.

She nods yes.

JASON
(hesitates)
And I'm wearing aahh... a tuxedo. I'm aahh... a prince. I am Prince Charming.
(with confidence)
Fuck it... I'm fuckin' Prince Charming. And I'm checking you out.

LYRIC
Do you like my dress?

He jumps atop the branch.

JASON
Yes.

LYRIC
Is my lipstick fine.

JASON
Perfect.

LYRIC
And my face.

JASON
Beautiful.

A beat. He gently touches her lips.

JASON
I've never seen lips so perfect. I'm never seen a face more beautiful.

She moves to say something. He puts his finger to her lips to quiet her.

JASON
Shhh... listen.

He caresses her face as the music of NATURE'S ORCHESTRA CONTINUES.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

Jason and Lyric walk hand-in-hand. Enjoying the comfort and calmness of love.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME - DAY

Lyric sits on the bank of the bayou, her feet in the water. Jason standing in the water gently rubs his hand against her right leg as he lifts it. He holds her foot in the cup of his hand. He sensuously washes her feet and kisses them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

The sky is painted with incredible hues of reds and purples. A full moon slowly rises over the bayou.

Lyric lies beside Jason gently brushing a blade of grass across his lips. Her dress, not completely buttoned, hangs from her shoulder. Jason wears only his pants. They've just made love. They are swimming in the souls of each other's eyes.

Lyric stands up and sensuously begins to unbutton her dress. Jason watches curiously. Her dress falls to the ground. They stare at each other for a moment. She smiles, then turns, and runs for the pier.

JASON
Hey, where are you going?

LYRIC
Swimming.

Jason chases after her.

JASON
Wait up!

She runs out onto the edge of the pier and turns around as Jason arrives. She wears only her bra and panties. She moves to the edge, her back to the water.

JASON
What are you doing?

LYRIC
Haven't you ever done a back-flip?

JASON
No.

LYRIC
You should try it. For one brief moment you're flying.

She pushes off and does a beautiful back-flip. Jason watches in awe as she flies through the air and hits the water. He dives in after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE - UNDERWATER SHOT - SAME TIME

Jason swims downward through the bluish-green waters and catches Lyric underwater. They kiss and embrace as they float upward towards the water's surface.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Lyric is pinning her hair up. Marti stands nearby busily stuffing her bra with tissues.

LYRIC
Why do you always do that?

MARTI
Girl, you know what they say. The bigger the titty the bigger the tip.

Marti continues.

MARTI
Oh Lord, my titties are so sore! Your brother just be sucking on these thangs like he breastfeedin' or something.

LYRIC
(sarcastic)
Sounds romantic.

MARTI
Well, we got it like that.

Marti begins to button up her uniform.

MARTI
So what's going on with your love life? Come on, give up the 411.

LYRIC
We just went to the bayou.

MARTI
(raising her eyebrows)
The bayou. Well, what did ya'll do at the bayou?

LYRIC
We walked, we talked, we played. He washed my feet.

MARTI
(shocked)
He what?! Girl, I would <u>die</u> for a nigger who washed my feet.

Lyric laughs and begins to remember.

LYRIC
And then he laid me down. And he stroked my hair -- gentle.

Marti is swooning.

MARTI
(awestruck)
You done made love. 'My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep. The more I give to thee, the more I have. For both are infinite.' Shakespeare.

LYRIC
Marti, there may be someone out there who can give you the same thing.

A beat.

MARTI
(joking it off)
A man who's better than Alonzo? Child, I don't think so.

Marti continues to get dressed, Lyric looks at her sadly.

INT. LYRIC'S APT. - DEN - NIGHT

Joshua sits beside Alonzo on the couch. Ron sits in a nearby chair, his feet resting on the coffee table. Darryl stands, looking out of the window. The men sip from beers and Alonzo smokes a cigarette as he hovers over a map that lies on the table. He's giving instructions.

ALONZO
We got five minutes to put the work in. Ron, you hold the customers and security down. Josh, you cover the tellers with me, any talkin' I do it. We get in, we get the money, we get out. No one get greedy, no one get caught.

JOSHUA
I don't know, A 1, I might feel like shoppin'.

Alonzo quickly picks a gun up from the table and seriously turns to Joshua, putting the gun to his chin.

ALONZO
Only if you willing to pay the price, my brother.

JOSHUA
Get that shit outta my face.

CONTINUED:

A tense beat. Alonzo pulls the gun back.

JOSHUA
Now let's get to business, I'm ready to get paid.

ALONZO
I'm the chief, you the Indian. And ain't nobody gettin' paid, till I say so.

RON
(to Joshua)
You cool?

JOSHUA
Yeah, I'm cool.

ALONZO
You better be. We in at 3 o'clock. Not 2:59. Not 3:01. You wait long, you wait wrong.

Alonzo goes back to the map, Joshua shoots him a bitter look. Lyric, in her Denny's uniform, walks out of her room.

ALONZO
Fuck, I didn't think she was home.

Passing the men, she eyes them disgustedly. Her eyes lock with Joshua's. Joshua's gaze follows her out the door. Alonzo notices.

ALONZO
What you lookin' at my sister for?

JOSHUA
Your sister? Man, I ain't thinkin' 'bout her ass. My brother got that shit under control.

ALONZO
Oh... is that right.

He thinks a moment and returns to the map.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jason and Lyric lie atop the hood of his car, their backs resting against the windshield. They gaze upward. A JET ROARS overhead. We PULL BACK and DISCOVER that they are beside a gate near the ending of the runway of Houston Hobby Airport.

LYRIC
So why do you like planes so much?

JASON
It's a long story.

LYRIC
I'm listening.

JASON
There was this cat named old man Johnson. Maddog used to take us to his field. He'd water the wildflowers with a fire plane and I thought it was magic. I called him the rainmaker. He's dead now.

LYRIC
Magic never dies.

They look at each other for a beat. Another plane flies overhead. Jason excitedly looks to it.

JASON
An M.D.11. The newest and largest passenger plane. A fast motherfucker, 550 miles per hour. Got a wing span of about 169 feet...

He looks to her.

JASON
And five inches. You know how far you can go on that plane without stoppin'?

She nods "no."

JASON
Seven thousand, nine hundred and sixty miles.

LYRIC
You sure know a lot about 'em.

JASON
I remember the first plane I ever built. Maddog gave it to Joshua but Joshua wouldn't touch it. I stayed up all night putting it together. It was something else. I was ten.

LYRIC
Joshua didn't want it?

JASON
Naw, he and Maddog never got along. Funny the one thing Maddog could offer Joshua, Joshua didn't want.
(a beat)
Been downhill ever since. Josh been in jail four times now, and I'm hopin' there ain't a fifth. It'll kill Mama.

A beat. In Jason's face Lyric sees the depth of his anguish.

LYRIC
Jason, there's something I gotta tell you about your brother.

JASON
My brother?

LYRIC
He's robbin' a bank tomorrow with them.

JASON
Who's them?

LYRIC
My brother and his crew.

JASON
You never told me you had a gangsta brother.

LYRIC
Who doesn't in the harbor.

A beat.

JASON
Why are you just tellin' me now?

LYRIC
'Cuz I don't want you to get hurt.

Jason quickly jumps from the car and begins to open the car door. Lyric follows him.

JASON
I've gotta talk to Joshua.

They get into the car and speed off.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jason's car rolls up in front of Lyric's apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jason and Lyric stare straight ahead. All is silent.

LYRIC
Don't cross Alonzo. I think God forgot to give him a heart.

JASON
I'm just gonna talk to Josh.

An empty cold look of fear engulfs her face.

LYRIC
I stopped dating guys in the harbor 'cuz I was tired of wonderin' if I'd find 'em one day in a body bag. Promise me all you gonna do is talk.

A beat.

JASON
I promise.

Still in a daze she opens the car door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

She heads for her apartment building. As she begins up the steps Jason looks to her.

JASON
I think it's time for us to get on that bus.

Excitedly she whips around to him.

LYRIC
What?

Jason steps out of the car. He approaches her. They are face to face.

JASON
I think it's time to stop watching those buses and time to get on one.

LYRIC
Where will we go?

JASON
Where do you want to go?

LYRIC
(excited)
Everywhere! When can we leave?

JASON
When do you want to leave?

Lyric thinks a moment.

LYRIC
(an urgent whisper)
Why wait? Why not tomorrow?

Jason smiles.

JASON
Meet me at the pier when the sun leaves footprints across the sky.

Lyric thrusts her arms around him with new-found hope. Like steel to magnet so are their eyes. Locked with the truest of bonds. CAMERA TILTS UP and we discover Alonzo watching them.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

The sun bounces off of any object that will reflect its brightness.

The white gravel rooftop is covered with broken beer bottle litter and other artifacts of ghetto life. Joshua lies face up and shirtless on a bench press gritting his teeth as he moves a heavy weight bar up and down with a relentless urgency. His sweaty muscles rippling again and again. He gives one final thrust and places the bar back in its stationary position. He rises, grabs his shirt from the ledge and throws it on as he heads for the exit. The door flies open and Jason steps onto the roof.

JASON
How's the workout.

JOSHUA
Kickin'. I'll catch ya.

Joshua moves to the door. Jason blocks his way.

JASON
You in a hurry.

JOSHUA
Yeah, man.

JASON
Where you going?

JOSHUA
Got some business to cover.

JASON
What kinda business you got?

JOSHUA
Just some ghetto shit, nigger.
(frustrated)
Come on, J., don't sweat me.

He moves for the door again. Jason grabs his arm.

JASON
You're playin' me again.

JOSHUA
What you talkin' about?

JASON
You think you man enough to rob a bank?

Joshua stares at Jason.

JOSHUA
It was that bitch, wasn't it?

JASON
(disgusted)
You ain't nothin'. You so sorry you had to go to another nigger in charge. You can't even run your own shit. You ain't no man.

Joshua pulls his arm away. A tense beat. He slowly retrieves a gun from his back waistband. Holding it by the barrel, he offers it to Jason.

JOSHUA
Can't rob no bank without no piece.

Jason slowly takes the gun. Joshua moves to the door as he opens it.

JASON
Yo, Josh.

Joshua looks to Jason.

JASON
I didn't mean it, man. You know that.

JOSHUA
Yeh. I know.

With this Joshua leaves, Jason stares at the door.

EXT. STOOP - MORNING

Joshua exits from the apartment and begins down the steps. He stops and reaches for his right ankle. He pulls a small silver pistol from his timberland. He checks his watch and hurries down the block.

INT. CAR - CLOSE ON HANDS - DAY

Loading pistols. CAMERA PULLS BACK and reveals Alonzo and Ron in the back seat. Darryl's in the driver's seat.

ALONZO
(to Ron)
I thought you told me that mutha fucka is reliable.

RON
He gonna be here.

ALONZO
(looking at his watch)
Two minutes and we do this shit.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

CAMERA PANS AROUND the Texan Centennial memorabilia that decorates the wall of the old; majestic plantation-like bank. A huge Texan flag rests beside the American flag. The bank is small with only four tellers.

CAMERA PULLS BACK and we DISCOVER Ron standing guard over all of the customers as they lie on the floor singing "The National Anthem."

The security guard lies on the floor in front of him. Ron has his foot placed atop the man's back. Alonzo holds his gun on a LADY TELLER who empties her register into a bag. She's incredibly nervous. Alonzo and Ron wear ski masks.

ALONZO
Hurry up!

The woman stuffs more quickly and passes it to the next teller, a white man in his late 30s. The man eyes Alonzo and begins to empty his register. Ron notices one customer, a redneck white man, reaching for something.

RON
Hands down!

The redneck drops his hands. Ron looks to the clock. Tension. Suddenly, Joshua bursts through the front door. Alonzo and Ron quickly whip around. The redneck pulls a GUN. BOOM. Ron falls to the floor. BOOM. Joshua shoots the redneck. Everyone begins to scream. The ALARM SOUNDS. Alonzo turns back to the teller and discovers him running into the safe. BOOM. Alonzo shoots at the man. It's too late, the bullet ricochets off of the steel door. All is failed.

ALONZO
Fuck! Let's go!

Furiously Alonzo heads for the door.

JOSHUA
Where's the money?

ALONZO
Fuck the money! Let's go!

Alonzo is nearing the door.

JOSHUA
I'm runnin' my own shit and I'm gettin' paid!

Joshua spots a yuppie white man in his early 30s lying on the floor wearing a Rolex. Joshua points his gun at the man.

JOSHUA
Give me your watch!

The man scared to death shakes his head "No!"

JOSHUA
Give me your watch!

The man once again nods "no."

JOSHUA
You disrespectin' me?!

He kicks the man.

JOSHUA
Huh?! You dissin' me?!

Another kick and another. Joshua is relentless. He's now kicking the man's head. Blood's spewing forth, splattering onto Joshua. Customers scream in terror. Alonzo can't believe this, he heads out. The man's either unconscious or dead. Joshua takes the watch. He then shoots at the ceiling and says:

JOSHUA
Tell 'em Jesse James robbed this mutha fucka!

With this he splits.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The car rushes to the curb. Alonzo runs to the car door looking back to the bank's entrance. Joshua follows looking at the watch. They jump in and speed off.

INT. ALONZO'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

As Darryl quickly drives the car back into the harbor Alonzo is in the backseat furiously pummeling Joshua.

JOSHUA
I was late, man. I fucked up alright?

ALONZO
Fucked up?! Bitch, you did more than fuck up, you got Ron aced!

JOSHUA
Don't blame me! Blame that bitch ass sister of yours?!

Alonzo now holds Joshua by the collar.

ALONZO
Why my sister got to do with this?!

JOSHUA
Everything! She told my brother what was goin' down. That's why I was late, man, he was sweatin' me!

Alonzo releases Joshua, looks to Darryl.

ALONZO
Stop the car and open his goddamn door.

JOSHUA
(pleading)
We can get another bank, man. No problem... no problem.

The CAR comes to a SCREECHING halt. Alonzo places a gun at Joshua's temple. Beads of sweat form on Joshua's forehead.

ALONZO
Bitch, we outta business.

Silent tension. Darryl opens Joshua's door.

JOSHUA
(forcing a smile)
What you doin' man?

Alonzo stares at him, then lets down the gun and moves comfortably back into his seat. Silence.

ALONZO
(cold)
Naw I'm gonna make you sweat.

Then quick as lightning a rage covers Alonzo's face as he forcefully kicks Joshua out of the car. Joshua rolls out onto the street. Darryl shuts the door, gets back into the car. Joshua watches as they speed off.

INT. ALEXANDER'S APT. - NIGHT

Gloria stands at the sink busily washing dishes. Jason stands behind her drying dishes and putting them away.

JASON
Mama, what's the most special place you ever been to?

Gloria thinks a moment, a smile covering her face, and begins to wash again.

GLORIA
Hawaii. Maddog was on R and R from the war and the Army flew us lonesome women out to see our men. Maddog greeted me with leis. Even my hair smelled like jasmine. It was something else.

A half beat. And then she turns to him.

GLORIA
Why?

JASON
I've been thinking about getting on a bus.

GLORIA
And where would you be going?

JASON
Everywhere!

She chuckles, turns back to the sink, grabs a pile of plates then waves to the cabinets. As she does.

GLORIA
Chile, who filled your head with such thoughts?

Jason is at the trash can pulling the drawstring on a trash bag. He doesn't respond. As she places the dishes into the cabinet, she hesitates a moment, then places them down.

GLORIA
It's Lyric, isn't it?

Excitedly Jason moves to his mother.

JASON
Mama, we just gonna get on a bus. Destination don't matter. We're just gonna go. Maybe to the opera. Maybe to the ocean.

Gloria turns and moves back to the sink and begins to wipe the counter. Jason watches on confusedly.

GLORIA
Your brother's gonna miss you.

A beat.

JASON
He'll be alright. Mama, can't you be happy for me?

GLORIA
(touching his cheek)
I am.

BOOM! Jason and Gloria look to the door. Joshua enters wired, paces the floor back and forth, quickly, nervously. He's doused in blood. Gloria is frozen still.

GLORIA
Death done come to my house again.

Jason rushes to his brother. Joshua mumbles to him.

JOSHUA
(mumbling quickly)
I don't know wheres he gonna be. I don't know. He's gonna come lookin' for me. He's gonna kill me...

JASON
Josh, man, what happened?

Ignoring Jason's question he continues pacing like a scared rat.

JOSHUA
He shoulda waited for me, man. Five minutes wouldn't made no difference. He don't know how to run no crew.

GLORIA
(still frozen)
Death done come to my door again.

JASON
(to Joshua)
What the fuck are you talking about?

JOSHUA
(still mumbling)
I was late. That's why the mutha fucka got aced. They shoulda waited for me.

JASON
(grabbing Joshua by the arm)
What the fuck are you talking about?

GLORIA
I knew he would. I just hoped he was looking for me.

JOSHUA
(angrily)
You made me late!

Joshua pulls his arm away from Jason.

JASON
You did it, didn't you.

Joshua stares at his brother. No response.

JASON
You did it! You robbed that mutha fuckin' bank!

JOSHUA
Just like a man, J.
(showing the new watch on his wrist)
Check out the goods, J.
Check it out.

GLORIA
They told me you was a sinner but I believed a sinner could be saved. And every night I prayed. Every night...

JASON
(pushing him)
You stupid muthafucka.

As she falls to her knees weeping in agony.

GLORIA
Every night.

Jason turns to his mother and rushes to comfort her. Joshua slithers down the wall. Jason lifts his mother from the floor and holds her. He begins to move her in a slow dance. She sobs silently. Joshua remains on the floor cupping his knees rocking back and forth.

JOSHUA
You mad at me? What did I do?

Jason continues to sorrowly sway with his mother. The walls closing in, a noose tightening.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRESTLE BRIDGE - SUNSET

As we MOVE TOWARDS the pier we PASS Lyric's suitcase. We CONTINUE and DISCOVER Lyric standing on the edge. She looks out to the sun melting into the water. Lyric turns and looks back to the foliage and can barely make out the image of Jason in the shadows. A smile engulfs her face.

LYRIC
(arms outstretched; reciting to the world)
'Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and crystal brooks,
With silken lines, and silver hooks...

As he becomes visible, she discovers the numb, empty expression he wears. Her smile fades to sadness.

Jason stops a few feet before her. A moment of silence as they stare at each other.

LYRIC
We're not going, are we?

No response.

LYRIC
You can't just come into my life and wake me up and then ask me to go back to sleep.

Jason looks away avoiding her eyes. Tears fill his.

JASON
It's my family. They need me.

LYRIC
(angrily)
I need you!

JASON
I can't leave my brother. Everything's fucked up.

LYRIC
What are you gonna do? Let your brother's fuck-ups rule your life?

JASON
Lyric...

LYRIC
(interrupting)
Shut up.

A beat.

JASON
You don't underst...

LYRIC
(interrupting)
Shut up! I guess that's why I spent all these years fantasizin' 'cause I couldn't stand this Harbor shit. I'm tryin' to love you, Jason. I'm tryin' to give you my heart, but I told you I don't want it broken.

A beat.

LYRIC
But that's what you gonna do if you keep tryin' to save a brother that don't wanna be saved. What kinda hold does he have on you. Why do you keep havin' nightmares?

They stare at each other a beat. Jason's eyes are watering, he begins to bite his lip, feeling the pain.

JASON
I don't know. I don't know! Guess it's just my life... My life.
(chuckles)
It's all fucked up! It's all fucked up!
(strikes out at the world)
It's been fucked up since...

LYRIC
Since what Jason... Since what?!

He crumbles to his knees, before Lyric, painfully.

JASON
(painfully crying)
He wasn't trying to hurt him, he was tryin' to hug him.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. GLORIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joshua runs to the nightstand, opens the drawer, and takes out a gun. Jason bolts into the room.

JASON
(angrily)
What you doin'?! Put it back!

Jason moves for Joshua. Joshua holds the gun on him.

JOSHUA
(with cold eyes)
I ain't gonna let him kill her.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S DEN - SAME TIME

Joshua stands with gun aimed on his father. Gloria is weakened and crying. She looks up. Horror covers her face.

GLORIA
(shaking her head)
No... Put that away.

Jason grabs Joshua from behind. The gun falls to the floor.

Maddog looks to the boys then back to Gloria who is nearing unconsciousness. He picks up her hand. Both boys are reaching for the gun. He slides the ring on it. Maddog looks back to the boys. Jason has gotten grip of the gun. Maddog reaches for his sons. The sudden movement startles Jason. He looks up quickly. The gun aimed at Maddog.

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

GUNSHOT EXPLODES in Jason's mind. BOOM! His hand extended like a mock pistol. He quivers, crying, once again a devastated 11-year-old.

JASON
I'm sorry, Daddy. I'm sorry.

Lyric watches Jason tearfully. With the patience of a mother she moves to him. She gently guides his hands down putting the gun to rest.

LYRIC
It's not your fault, Jason.

Jason remains on the ground looking downward.

LYRIC
You were just trying to be a hero. And that's what you're doing now. Sometimes a hero just has to walk away.

A beat. His eyes still stare at the ground.

LYRIC
Walk away, Jason... or we can't be together.

With this Lyric sadly walks away picking up her suitcase as she heads home.

Lyric disappears into the darkness. Jason remains frozen consumed in self-pity. Jason slowly pulls himself from the ground and begins home. After a few steps he stops. He looks back to the pier. As he eyes it a rage of determination swallows his sadness. He charges the pier, pivots, and backflips. The water is still. Suddenly he breaks through the surface shaking his head of the wetness in anger.

INT. JASON'S ROOM - NIGHT

It is a scorching hot summer night. Jason tosses and turns in his bed, unable to fall asleep.

The common SOUNDS of the HARBOR ECHO throughout the room. He tosses the covers off of him and lies on his back. He looks at his clock, which reads 3:30 AM.

His eyes begin to examine his surroundings, his world. They fall on:

WALL

Where toy military weaponry and genuine memorabilia remain on display. He hears the sounds of WAR: gunfire, screams, explosions and helicopters. Some of these are products of the outside streets and some the products of his own imagination.

BOOM! With the GUNSHOT, Jason quickly sits straight up in bed in fear. His body is covered with sweat. He looks about the room very slowly and stops at Joshua's empty bed. He stares at the bed.

CUT TO:

CLOSET

Where Jason rustles through some things on his top shelf. Behind it all -- a slide projector.

FLASHCUT TO:

PROJECTOR LIGHT

which is blinding.

SERIES OF SLIDES

Maddog playing with his family. Another slide: Maddog proudly stands in his uniform with his arm around a beautiful Gloria. He holds Joshua, and Jason stands before them. Another slide: Gloria rolls Maddog out of a plane in a wheelchair; he has lost a leg. Gloria and the boys smile, happy to see their father. Maddog's face seems void, empty and bitter. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Jason, sitting beside the projector, looking at this image.

GLORIA (O.S.)
That's the day he came home. Should of been a band and job waitin' for him. But America had forgot.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Gloria watching the slides. She is standing behind Jason. Slides of a vibrant Maddog continue. With his family. With his war buddies. In camouflage uniform throwing the peace sign.

Jason, surprised by Gloria, tries to gain composure.

JASON
(forcing a smile)
Mama. I thought you were asleep.

GLORIA
Naw, baby, I'm wide awake.

She moves beside him. And watches the slides as they continue. An especially lovable image of a smiling Maddog appears.

GLORIA
Look at him so strong and handsome. When I met him, I felt like the luckiest girl in the world. Then the draft came, but at least I had my moment.

She kneels beside him. His eyes are filled with tears. The slides continue.

GLORIA
And now it's time for you to have yours. Tonight when you held me I felt your dreams dying.
(a beat)
I realized that you've been sacrificing your life for your brother's. And I let you.

She lifts his head.

GLORIA
He's my child and I'll take care of him. You take care of your dreams. You take care of Lyric.

The slides continue. More tears stream down his eyes. She holds him. Rocking her baby.

A beat. She gently pulls away from him.

GLORIA
There are no debts in this house. You don't owe us. Nobody killed Maddog. He died in that war... they just didn't bury him.

Tears stream down Jason's face.

She kisses him on the forehead and leaves. As the slides continue the gates slowly open. He sobs and sobs. His body convulses with pain. In the background standing in the shadows we DISCOVER Joshua, coldly staring on. Motionless. The slides continue.

INT. LYRIC'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Lyric lies in her bed in a fetal position facing the wall.

ANGLE - WINDOW

Jason enters through the window and looks at her a moment.

JASON
(whispering)
Will you have me?

LYRIC
Jason?

JASON
(approaching her)
I'm ready.

No response. A beat. He continues toward her.

JASON
Did you hear me, Lyric? I'm ready.

LYRIC
(softly)
Are you sure?

He sits on the bed and as he excitedly pulls her over:

JASON
Yes I'm...

Abruptly he stops talking. Rage covers his face. She's been beaten.

LYRIC
It doesn't matter.

Jason pulls her back to him, again.

JASON
(angrily)
It was Alonzo.

Fiercely he bolts up from the bed.

LYRIC
(fearfully)
Jason...

JASON
(cutting her short)
Are your bags still packed?

She nods yes.

JASON
Get 'em.

He storms out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. LYRIC'S APT. - DEN - DAY

Jason charges through the den furiously.

JASON
Alonzo!

He throws open Erma's bedroom door.

JASON
Alonzo!

The room is empty. He looks into the kitchen. Lyric rushes in holding a bag.

LYRIC
Jason! Stop it!

He's deaf with rage.

JASON
Come on, muthafuck! Show your face!

Lyric grabs his arm. He pulls away from her and heads out of the apartment.

EXT. LYRIC'S APT. - DAY

Alonzo approaches the stoop.

INT. LYRIC'S APT. - STAIRWELL - DAY

Jason charges down the stairs. Lyric chases after him.

LYRIC
Jason! What are you doing.

EXT. LYRIC'S APT. - DAY

Jason charges out of the building, spots Alonzo, and jumps him. Alonzo is taken by surprise, but soon begins to fight back. The fight is fast and furious. In his rage Jason soon gets the better of Alonzo. Jason angrily

JASON
You sorry muthafucka. Too weak to come to me or my brother. If you ever touch her again, I'll kill you, muthafucka.

Bleeding and near unconsciousness Alonzo musters the strength to spit at Jason. Angrily Jason throws Alonzo to the pavement.

JASON
I'll kill you.

Jason grabs Lyric's bag from her. She stands beside Erma, who holds a bag of groceries. He heads to the car and throws the bag into it. He looks to the apartment entranceway. His eyes lock with Lyric's. He opens the car door. Lyric stares for a beat and then looks to her grandmother. Erma nods a loving goodbye and hugs her grandbaby. As Lyric gets into the car, Alonzo is pulling himself up from the ground.

ALONZO
(shouting)
You a dead man! You hear me! You a dead man. Youse and your brother! Both of you! Muthafuckin' walkin' targets.

Without even looking to him, Jason jumps into the car and speeds off.

ALONZO
Bitch, you ain't gonna get far 'cause he's mine, he's mine.

INT. JASON'S ROOM - DAY

Hurriedly Jason and Lyric enter the room. Jason moves to the closet as Lyric moves to the dresser. He retrieves a suitcase as she gathers clothing.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alonzo's car cruises down the street.

INT. JASON'S ROOM - DAY

Jason and Lyric continue to pack even more urgently.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alonzo's car turns a corner and continues

INT. JASON'S ROOM - DAY

The suitcase is closed on the bed. Lyric stands near the door. Jason rummages through his nightstand drawer hurriedly looking for something. He pulls various items out of the drawer. Pencils, crumpled envelopes, coins, flashlight. Then the GUN he took from Joshua. He sets them atop the nightstand as he continues to search.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOMESTEAD AVENUE - DAY

Alonzo's car nears the Alexander's apartment building.

INT. ALONZO'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Darryl drives as Alonzo and another CREW MEMBER prepare their guns.

INT. JASON'S ROOM - DAY

Frustrated, Jason continues rummaging through the drawer. Relief covers his face as he pulls out some dried roses. Lyric smiles as she realizes they're the roses she left him with the day they met.

The silent moment is cracked by the CLICKING of a GUN. They both look to the DOOR. Slowly it CREAKS open as if by itself. Joshua stands in the doorway. A gun by his side. He stares at them. Blank eyes. A cold heart.

JOSHUA
Where you goin', Jason?

A beat.

JOSHUA
She's takin' you.

JASON
Joshua, I love her.

JOSHUA
You can't leave, Jason.

JASON
(to Lyric)
Wait for me outside.

Lyric cautiously moves for the door. Joshua quickly aims the gun at her.

JOSHUA
Don't move

JASON
Are you crazy, man?!

Joshua still holds the gun on Lyric.

JOSHUA
(calmly; convinced)
Yeah, I am crazy. Just like Maddog.

JASON
(soothing)
Joshua, you're not crazy.

JOSHUA
(gritting his teeth)
Yes I am.

JASON
(firmly)
You're not like Maddog.

Enraged, Joshua thrusts his hands to his ears. He doesn't want to hear this. The gun still in his hand.

JOSHUA
Yes I am!

His body falls limp. The gun lowers.

JOSHUA
(crying)
I'm tired, Jason...I'm tired of tryin' to do right... I'm tired.
(pleading; whispering)
Get the gun.

Jason with tears in his eyes, looks at the gun in the nightstand, and shakes his head no.

JOSHUA
(desperate)
Get the gun.

Jason reaches for him lovingly.

JASON
Josh...

Quick as lightning, Joshua whips around to Lyric and SHOOTS her. BOOM! She falls to the floor. Jason grabs the gun off the nightstand and holds it on his brother. His hand quivers. Joshua whips around to Jason holding the gun on him.

JOSHUA
(with relief)
Now shoot me

JASON
Don't make me do this again.

JOSHUA
(demanding)
Shoot me.

Jason stares deep into Joshua's eyes.

A beat.

Jason slowly lowers the gun.

Solemnly, he walks to Lyric. Joshua, gun still raised, stands motionless. A tormented soul. Jason bends down beside her and begins to arrange her clothes. He moves the hair from her face.

He kisses her. With bloodied hands he wipes the tears from his eyes. He then picks her up and begins to walk away.

As Jason leaves the room, Joshua remains motionless.

JOSHUA
(whispering to himself)
I shoulda killed Maddog the first time.

HALL

A crowd of people have gathered in the hallway to see what has happened. Jason carries Lyric down the hall. He struggles to hold back the tears and walk with strength. At the end of the hallway, a man stands with a camcorder, filming.

BOOM! A lone GUNSHOT ECHOES through the hallway. Jason's body tenses. The ghost is now at rest. He continues walking. Alonzo and his crew bolt from the stairs into the hallway. Guns drawn. They come to an abrupt halt. They lower their guns. Alonzo stares, frozen, as he watches Jason carry his bloodied sister.

CAMCORDER POV

In black and white, we see Jason approaching. His image getting closer and closer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELMO'S - NIGHT

The rows and rows of televisions depict the image of Jason carrying Lyric.

It seems as though every major news station has gotten hold of the camcorder tape. Slowly and in sync, the televisions fade to black.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The sky is a dreamy blue and the sun seems brighter than normal. In the distance, a Greyhound bus travels a country road. CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES ACROSS the infinite fields toward the bus until We DISCOVER Jason peering from the passenger window.

JASON (V.O.)
I was a traveller in a desert. I saw a drop of water in a barren land. I tasted its sweetness -- and I learned to sing. And I will never forget the Lyric... I guess everyone lives with a ghost... some good... some bad... Memories have a way of boomeranging and changing the tunes of life forever. I have learned to live my life like an explorer, for life is nothing less than an adventure... an adventure of self-discovery... She is now an inseparable part of my life... I have realized that there is music dwelling within me... and now it is time for me to dance across the stage... a pioneer in a new frontier. And I am not afraid -- after all, I have backflipped. And as I fly towards my destiny, I will always have a partner...

INT. BUS

CAMERA REVEALS Lyric resting her head in Jason's lap. He runs his fingers through her hair. She awakes, stretches, sits up, kisses him on the cheek and lays her head on his shoulder. They stare out of the window.

JASON (V.O.)
As for the rainmaker. He ain't dead. He'll never die. 'Cause he knows. Sometimes you've gotta make your own magic...

Jason turns to Lyric. They smile at each other and Lyric moves even closer to Jason, holding him tightly.

EXT. BUS

From across the field, we see the Greyhound bus disappearing into the distance. The sky becomes clouded with birds flocking in fear. The ole fire plane follows, showering the earth with imitation raindrops.

FADE OUT.

THE END